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REVENGE IS SWEET



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REVENGE IS SWEET.

A Tale.

BY

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REVENGE IS SWEET.

CHAPTER I.

“AND so you go home to-morrow, *ma petite Gabrielle* ?”

“Yes, I go home to-morrow ;” and a sigh followed the words.

“And are you not *glad* to go home, to live in a handsome house, to be in good society, to have money, friends, *enfin, everything*, and to be the cherished one of all ?”

Gabrielle smiled, a sad smile, though, for one so young.

“The cherished one of all !” she repeated.
“See, Marie, read this.”

She gave her friend a letter as she spoke ; it ran thus :

“In consequence of your brother’s death,

Gabrielle, I have sent for you to come home. Your mother has been much worried and upset of late, and feels quite unequal to fulfil the duties of her position. I shall expect you to take her place. As I have spared no expense in your education, I trust I shall find that you are equal to the duties which I intend you to perform. Let me give you one warning before we meet; in your childhood you were impetuous, sentimental, and obstinate; if these faults are not cured by your residence under Madame Delorme's roof it will be the worst for you. I expect to find in my daughter a sensible young person, whose first idea is unflinching obedience to her father's wishes. I have given Madame Delorme directions for your journey; see that you follow them to the letter. You are to start on the 8th.

"Your father,

"ROBERT WYLDE."

"Well, Marie," as Mademoiselle Delorme finished the letter, "am I to be 'the cherished one of all?'" with a slight mimicry of the French accent.

"Ah, Gabrielle, Gabrielle, what a field is before you!" cried Marie enthusiastically.

“To have power, riches, all. If I could but change with you! and you, you little quiet thing, you sit dreaming there, as if the reality before you were not worth more than thousands of childish dreams!”

“Dreaming! yes, Marie, I *was* dreaming; I dreamed of a happy home, of love, of consoling my father and mother; I dreamed that their loss might have softened them; I dreamed all this, I say; but this letter awoke me; instead of the warm love I hoped to find after six years’ absence from home, I have a few peremptory lines, without one word of gladness for my return, one breath of the love I am longing for to soften their harshness. No, Marie, I am dreaming no longer; I have the reality too plainly before me for that.”

“And what would you have, then,” cried Marie Delorme, “love, affection, sympathy? Bah! these are things of one’s childhood; you are seventeen, Gabrielle, and should know better. The power of fascination, riches, position, these it is—or should be—a woman’s ambition to possess; for beauty—well,” and she glanced at the looking-glass behind her, the only luxury in the cold little bedroom—“well, I think I **am** contented with my share! but to be in your

place, to have *your* privileges, with *my* ambition, ah! that would be grand, that would be to *live*. Here I am only existing, and I shall be twenty to-morrow, Gabrielle, think of it, *twenty*! and I have not seen the world, at least the *rich* world, yet; you don't know how I long to see it sometimes, and you, who have all that I have not, you are not happy—you are not *wild* to go and enjoy your inheritance. *Love*, indeed, what is love that one should care for it. What is a man's love worth, *petite* Gabrielle, can you tell me that? No, I thought not! Well, *I* will tell you. There was a man once who loved a young and pretty girl, not only pretty, not only young, *then*, but loving, trusting and believing, aye, just as you are, little one, but she had no money, she was but a poor schoolmistress' daughter, and monsieur (who was an Englishman) would have—what do you call it, ah! 'lost caste'—if he had married out of his rank, and he remembered this when the marriage day was fixed, when he had taught the girl to love him—Heaven only knows *how dearly*—and he quietly went away and broke her heart; went away on pretext of his father's illness, and married a rich young Eng-

lish lady, ugly, but in good society, *enfin*; what was all right. Was not that a lesson to the poor girl, Gabrielle? Did she not learn then that nothing was worth having in the world but riches and rank; not truth, not love, not goodness, not anything else; only those things. Nay, I forgot, Gabrielle"—

She laid her white hand heavily on the girl's shoulder, her fair face set, and her white teeth gleaming through the perfect arch of her lips, stiffened as they were in a bitter smile—

"One thing more, without which all the rest may go; revenge—aye, and she will have it some day."

"Marie, dear Marie!" Gabrielle cried in great distress, "you never told me this before. Oh! poor Marie! how I pity you; but—revenge—no, no, dear one, do not think of revenge, leave him to his conscience, leave him." She paused, for Marie's face had changed, she laughed a light merry laugh.

"Why, Gabrielle, what are you saying? How could I, a poor penniless girl, revenge myself on monsieur, who was so far above me? I was but joking, child, when I said that; for the rest, I would gladly change with you,

but that is not possible, and we are losing our time; we must begin packing at once if you mean to sleep to-night."

She rose from her seat by the window, where she had been sitting by Gabrielle's side, and began to open boxes, drawers, cupboards, and taking out dresses, folding and packing them—as only a Frenchwoman can do—deftly and neatly, and with marvellous quickness. Gabrielle's eyes followed her graceful movements with a wistful gaze; something like that of a spaniel, who feels that his master's nature is different to his own, and that he cannot fathom it; for Gabrielle did not understand her friend; she loved, nay, almost worshipped her, with all the ardour of a very young heart which has been thrown back upon itself; but she looked upon her as an enigma. Poor little Gabrielle! she had such a humble opinion of herself, for eleven years of her short life she had been barely tolerated by her parents, when she was a baby, because she was a girl and they wished for a boy, and when the boy came at last, she was completely set aside; and, finally, when she had been one day unjustly punished for her brother's fault, she had been banished from home—(for protesting

against the injustice of her punishment)—and sent to school in France, that her parents might spoil their darling boy at their leisure. At school Gabrielle had been comparatively happy. Madame Delorme, although strict, could also be kind, and Marie Delorme liked the simple inoffensive little girl. The distance from home was considered excuse sufficient for her spending her holidays at Madame Delorme's, and for six years she had not been home. Once during that time she had spent her holidays with an aunt who lived in France; and it was while she was away that Marie's engagement had taken place, which was the reason that Gabrielle had never heard of it. Then came the summons home, because her brother's death had so completely prostrated her mother as to render her incapable of undertaking the management of the house, and when Madame Delorme told Gabrielle the news, she had hoped that at length she was to be loved at home. How great was the shock of her father's cold letter to the warm-hearted girl! She had been much depressed by the news of her brother's death, for whom, although he had been a most unloveable child, she still felt some affection, and when the unusual

event of a letter from her father had raised her expectations, the re-action was the more painful.

She was leaving Marie Delorme, the only human being who loved her, or indeed ever had loved her, and going to the same stiff, formal, cold, loveless home that she had been thankful to leave (for, with the exception of Colonel Heyton, who lived near the Wyldes, and had often taken pity upon the lonely little girl, and sought to amuse her, no one had noticed her), and as she thought of all her past happiness—as the poor child had thought her school life to be—she felt utterly lonely and desolate.

“Ah! if I were like you, Marie,” she said wistfully, as she watched her friend’s graceful figure, and then she rose and stood before the glass. It was a fair picture she saw reflected there; a small well-shaped head, with coils of bright brown hair twisted round it, a fair sweet young face with delicate features, large soft hazel eyes and a clear complexion,—but Gabrielle turned away with a sigh.

“How I wish I were like you, Marie,” she repeated to her friend, who stood behind her watching with an amused smile, “No one at

home will care for me when they see what a stupid plain little thing I am."

"Never mind, *petite* Gabrielle," and Marie stooped and kissed the sad young face, "You are much better as you are, and you will be much happier than I shall ever be; and now go to bed; I will do all there is to be done, and you will feel quite bright to-morrow."

Gabrielle attempted to remonstrate, but, as usual, Marie's stronger will prevailed.

Until late into the night Marie went on with her work, then when all was done she took the little lamp in her hand, bent over the little sleeping figure on the bed, and kissed her cheek.

"Will you always love me as well as you do now?" she murmured. "No, no, you too will forget me, and it is better so, for when I see your innocent face I forget my vow of revenge on Lewis, and I will not forget."

She turned and left the room, passed down a short corridor and opened a door at the other end. The room she entered was almost a counterpart of the one she had left. The cold polished floor, the clean white dimity curtains, the light painted wood furniture, all were the same. She put down the lamp, went to the

window, threw it open and looked out. The moon shone on the little back garden, the playground of Madame Delorme's pupils. Each leaf, each flower was to be seen as clearly almost as by day. Marie drew a deep breath.

"Ah, this is pleasant," she murmured to herself, "and yet this warm soft air reminds me too well of some happy summer evenings long ago. 'Leave him to his conscience' Gabrielle said, poor little thing, she thinks everyone has a conscience as tender as hers. His conscience! He has not one. Ah! will I not be revenged some day!" and the beautiful face lighted up with a vindictive smile. "Yes, Lewis Daryl, we shall be even some time, I know it, I feel it here," and she pressed her hand to her heart. "Was not I as worthy of you as madame your wife? I had beauty, wit, goodness, and above all love for you. Ah!" and there was a little sob, "*what* love, such love as you *never* could have felt for me, I know. I would have died to serve you, if you had only been faithful. But you were not worthy of such love. I know it now, and you left me—*me*—who loved you so,—and *sold* yourself. No doubt you soon repented of your bargain, monsieur, but I want more revenge

than to know that you repent. I want to see you humbled, miserable, thoroughly in my power—and I will some day ; and then—*then* it will be *my* turn.”

She drew herself up as she spoke ; a beautiful creature was Marie Delorme always, but now, as her face glowed with emotion, her blue eyes lighted up, and her golden hair shone in the moonlight, she looked unearthly. A sound from below made her start, and then she heard a few chords on a guitar played in the next garden ; she drew back hastily and shut the window.

“Always watched, always overlooked,” she said, indignantly. “Have I not told him I do not love him ; why does he torment me ? Ah, well, ’tis the same all the world over, ‘*Il y a toujours un qui aime et l’autre qui se laisse aimer.*’” Her face softened and a smile replaced the look of scorn that so often marred her beauty “After all he loves me, poor fellow ; and I cannot blame him,” she added, as she stood before the glass, and let down a flood of rippling hair. “I *am* beautiful, and—and—it will not hurt him to be thrown over some day ; I will be more civil to Monsieur Josef to-morrow, *en attendant* the grand event of my life, the revenge which I know will come some day ; I

must have some distraction, and it will not hurt Josef to suffer a little."

And forgetting all else, the capricious girl began revolving in her head a thousand plans for the further subjugation of the poor captive to her charms, quite an unnecessary trouble, for he was already as completely enthralled as even she could wish. Such is the inconsistency of human nature! the very sin she had condemned in Lewis Daryl she was about to act herself. It never occurred to her that Monsieur Josef might have feelings as deep as her own.

CHAPTER II.

A PALE, faded-looking woman lay on a sofa in the large, luxuriantly furnished drawing-room at Exerton Manorhouse, with a weary, dissatisfied look on her face; Mrs. Wylde (for she was Gabrielle's mother) had found life a mistake from her earliest childhood; she had made the greatest mistake of her life in rejecting the man who really cared for her, and she followed it up by marrying a man who only wanted a head to

his house, not a wife to care for him. Some women in her case would have accepted their position gracefully and made the best of it, but she had never made the best of anything in her life, so she weakly bemoaned her fate in being unappreciated to whatever listener she could obtain, until her normal condition became one of gentle grumbling. Then came the children, whom she might have loved without fear of her affection being thrown back upon herself: but she spoilt the youngest until he became unbearable, and snubbed poor little Gabrielle, contriving all the time to persuade her husband that the little girl was obstinate and unmanageable; and so the poor child was sent to school, and the little despot, Arthur, reigned alone for six years. At his death Mrs. Wylde, whose heart and soul were wrapped up in him, was completely prostrated; she declined to exert herself; she resolutely refused consolation, and spent her time lying on the sofa and bemoaning her hard fate in losing the only creature who had ever loved her—she might have added, whom she had ever loved, and the addition might have taught her a lesson. But she did not for one moment imagine that her coldness and aggravating complaints had

been a great deal the means of estranging her husband; true, he was a hard, pompous, disagreeable man, but a warm-hearted and affectionate wife might have improved him very much; as it was, he had accustomed himself to look upon his wife's complaining as a necessary evil, and as he prided himself upon his stoicism, he bore it in silence, the more readily, perhaps, that he knew one sharp word of his would silence the flow of her eloquence, even at its height. When, however he found that she would no longer make the slightest exertion, that she considered it an intrusion on her grief to be asked to see the housekeeper, or attend to any one of the thousand little things which seem so trivial in themselves, but make all the difference between comfort and discomfort in a home—he wrote for his daughter to leave school, and come home and fulfil her mother's neglected duties. When he told his wife what he had done, she burst out in a torrent of complaints—(not in her usual weak way,) but with quite refreshing vigour.

“She did not want her daughter at home, it would only remind her more forcibly of the dear boy who was gone”—a loud sob—“but, of course her husband wanted to get rid of her ;

she had seen that long ago; well, he would regret it some day, when she was in her grave, &c., &c. She would not be set aside in her own house," and at this point she started up off the sofa. "She was perfectly capable of doing all there was to be done; but she would not be supplanted by her own daughter, she would come down to dinner and head the table that very day, and if the exertion killed her, well, so much the better, any other man would have seen that she needed rest, when it was hardly six months since her loss, but she knew her husband too well ever to expect consideration from *him*."

With which parting shaft she left the room, walked upstairs as she had not done for many a long day, and came down to dinner looking quite refreshed by her fit of temper. For once in his life, Mr. Wylde was pleased; he had produced the very effect he had wished; but, unfortunately, his satisfaction reached his wife's ears, and the next day she had subsided to her sofa and resumed her invalid airs, except that she had a long conference with the housekeeper every morning, in the course of which she gave so many opposite orders, that the poor woman was heard to say:

“She *did* wish missus hadn’t been roused up, or she was that contrary, there was no doing anything with her.”

And now Mrs. Wylde lay on the sofa awaiting her daughter’s arrival, for Gabrielle was expected home at once. There was a crunch of wheels on the gravel drive before the house, and in spite of herself, Mrs. Wylde listened. There was a bustle through the house, the unmistakeable stir of an arrival, and then the drawing room door was thrown open and Gabrielle ran in.

“Mamma, mamma!” it was all the poor child could say as she threw her arms round her mother’s neck; but Mrs. Wylde did not appreciate the embrace. She was ready dressed for dinner, and Gabrielle had crumpled her lace tucker—so awkward and provoking, so she only said languidly:—

“There, that will do, Milly; no, what *is* your name, I always forget,” (which she did not, for it had been her own choice, and only chosen because her husband disliked it) but Gabrielle did not know this, and large tears rose to her eyes as she said, “Gabrielle is my name, mamma.”

Poor girl! all the time she was driving from

the station she had been anticipating the meeting with her mother, and she had at length persuaded herself that as Mrs. Wylde had sent no message to her in her father's letter, she must be very ill indeed ; she must be changed, she could not be so cold as she used to be ; and so Gabrielle had allowed herself to imagine that her mother would greet her warmly, and seem glad to see her, and this cold speech of Mrs. Wylde's put an end to her bright visions at once. She turned away to hide her tears.

"May I go and take off my things ?" she said.

"Yes, you had better dress for dinner at once. Your father will not like you to be late ; for my part, I think you are much too young to dine with us, but he insists upon it, and of course I never have my own way."

Before Mrs. Wylde's speech was finished Gabrielle had left the room, and run upstairs to her own little bed-room, which she had had as a child. It had been newly furnished, and some one had evidently taken pains to make it comfortable, and in her gratitude Gabrielle accused herself of misinterpreting her mother's manner, for surely she must love her daughter if she could have all these preparations made for her.

Poor Gabrielle ! she needed some such consoling conviction to comfort her before the evening was over. Her father's greeting was a cold kiss, and "Well, so there you are, I hope you will remember all I told you ;" and the whole of dinner time Mrs. Wylde kept up a constant low murmur of complaint—the dishes, the servants, everything was grumbled at, and she wound up with "But of course it is of no use saying anything, when the servants see how my slightest wish is snubbed and put down, of course they won't attend to a word I say."

Then came the long evening in the drawing-room, where, fortunately, the windows were open to the lawn, and Gabrielle, taking advantage of her mother dozing on the sofa, escaped to the garden ; there she remained until the growing darkness reminded her that it was time to go in, and with a sigh she turned to the window.

The moon was shining brightly, and the old house looked picturesque in the weird light. It was a large, red brick building, with gable-ends, and had belonged to the Wylde's for some generations. Mr. Wylde, the present squire, was one of the richest men in the county, and Gabrielle would be heiress to an

unencumbered estate and a large fortune some day; she would have everything that Marie Delorme had envied her for possessing, everything but the home affection she longed for; and as the thought of her desolate position amidst all this wealth crossed the girl's mind, she said, passionately and aloud, "I would give all this up for ever in return for the love of one human being,—if my mother only loved me! Ah, this grandeur, this stiffness and formality—I hate it all! If I were but poor in riches, and rich in love, I would ask for nothing else."

CHAPTER III.

"**MADemoiselle Marie!** I am falling; save me!"——

Marie Delorme was pacing the little playground with a book in her hand, her eye reading while her thoughts followed Gabrielle, who had left that morning, when the above words greeted her ear; she turned quickly and looked up; a man, handsome, young, and tall, but very awkward-looking, was balancing himself

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on the top of the high wall which divided the playground from the garden next door. The wall was a narrow one, and the young man, in an undisguised agony of fright, was in the act of falling, and just as Marie burst into a fit of laughter, he rolled helplessly down at her feet. She drew back, laughing too much at first to speak, and then, when she had recovered her voice, she exclaimed indignantly, in a tone rendered slightly tremulous by the laughter she could hardly yet repress,—

“Monsieur Josef! what is the meaning of this? had I not forbidden you ever again to look over that wall?”

“Undoubtedly you did, mademoiselle,” was the rueful answer, as poor Monsieur Josef picked himself up and stood rubbing his knees, the picture of mortification. “Yet I could not believe you meant to be so cruel; I was just leaning over to catch sight of your face, that overhanging tree just hid it, and I found myself going—going—and here I am!”

“So I perceive; what do you suppose my mother would say, Monsieur Josef? just imagine if these had not been the holidays, and all the pupils had been here!”

“In that case, as mademoiselle very well

knows, I should not have looked over the wall. I am aware of madame's prohibition, and mademoiselle cannot say that I have ever disobeyed it."

"Well, Monsieur Josef, I suppose I must forgive you, as you could not well help yourself; and now you are here you may as well help me to tie up these flowers, and this creeper wants nailing against the wall. *I* cannot reach it, but you are taller than I am."

"Rather," responded Monsieur Josef with a complacent glance at his length of limb; he honestly thought his figure perfect. "At this moment I feel prouder than ever of my Herculean proportions."

Marie felt her inclination to laugh return, but she restrained herself with an effort and gravely pointed out what she wanted done. She made a pretty picture as she stood there in her soft grey dress; the sunlight falling on her face and lighting up the vivid carnation on her cheek and the gold tints of her hair; and evidently her companion appreciated it, for he paused now and then in his work to gaze at her with admiring eyes. There was silence between them for some time, and then Monsieur Josef spoke.

as love and affection. We have been brother and sister all our lives, let us remain so for the present, if you please. By the way, *as* your sister, let me tell you that you grow more awkward every day. When will you learn to walk well?"

"When *you* have learned to care for me. There, I will say no more since the subject does not please you. Am I then so very awkward? What must I do to improve myself?"

"See, walk as I do," and Marie swept across the little garden like a queen. Monsieur Josef attempted to imitate her, but the failure was so ludicrous, that Marie burst out laughing. He stood still in front of her at once.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "you may laugh, it will not hurt me, I would do anything to afford you amusement." It was said so seriously, and with such evident good faith, that Marie was touched.

"*Allons!*" she said, giving him her hand; "brothers and sisters should not quarrel, I did not mean to hurt your feelings."

"I believe you, mademoiselle; and now I fear I must leave you, my mother will require me to read aloud to her. Poor mother, it is her only recreation. Adieu then, Mademoiselle

Marie, *au revoir*." He kissed the hand he held in his, reverently and tenderly as any knight of old might have done, and then left the garden by the side door which led into his own grounds.

"He is growing better looking," thought Marie, when she was left alone. "It is a pity he is so clumsy; one can do nothing with his figure—bah! what does it matter to me? What shall I wear to-night? Black, I think, with a few carnations; I like to put on the colours that blondes so seldom wear."

* * * * *

Monsieur Josef's mother sat alone in her little sitting room, whose windows looked on the back garden. She was in a cushioned elbow-chair; by her side was a little table with a bell on it. Madame Olivier was blind, not from her cradle; she might not have felt it so much had that been the case, but it was of late years only that this affliction had come upon her; some said that the tears she shed for her husband's death had destroyed her sight, and it might have been the case, for she mourned him long and bitterly; be it as it might, some two years after his death, her sight gradually grew worse, and finally she became totally blind.

Monsieur Josef, who adored his mother, had called in the best doctors in France, and spared no pains and expense, but her sight was irretrievably gone, and she, who had been all her life the most energetic of women, was forced to lead a life of *inactivity*; idle she never was, it was wonderful to see what she managed to do with her hands, she was knitting now, but her thoughts were evidently not with her work—she was listening intently. A step sounded in the garden outside the window. “Ah! there he is,” she murmured to herself, “no matter what he is doing, he never fails me at this hour. May heaven bless him, as it does all good children.”

Monsieur Josef came into the room humming a tune.

“Well, and how do you find yourself this morning, dear mother,” he said gaily, as he came forward and kissed her.

“Well, thank you, my son; but you, did you succeed in your mission?”

“Yes; she will come with pleasure.”

“But something has annoyed you; tell me at once,” she said, with the quick instinct mothers always have.

"No, nothing, I assure you; Mademoiselle Marie was very affable."

Madame Olivier sighed.

"She is a dear girl," she said, "but I wish she was a little more serious. I wish she valued you more, Josef."

"Nay, mother, why should she?"

"You cannot hide your feelings from your mother, Josef, and I know you love her; as I know also that her heart is still with that young Englishman."

"The traitor! Ah, if I had him here! And you think she loves him still, mother?"

"I think that she *remembers* him still, it may be only as the recollection of a dream; but it is hard to forget when we have once loved, Josef."

"Yes, but she was so young! and in time—perhaps——"

"I hope so; I pray night and day that she may love you, my son. She is coming this evening, you say; well, I can tell, perhaps, if she has changed. It is long since I saw—I mean since she has been here. Ah! Josef, Josef! if I could but see, I might read her face better than you!"

“Nay, mother, I will be eyes to you ; do not grieve over the inevitable ; let us be happy. Where have I put that book we were reading ? Ah, I have it ; we will begin our morning’s entertainment, and not think any more of our troubles.”

* * * * *

A small select party of people were assembled in Madame Olivier’s little sitting room. There were, to begin with, Monsieur Gaspard and his wife and daughter ; Monsieur Gaspard was the mayor of the little town, a fat, heavy-looking man he was, but good-natured withal, and, indeed, it would have been impossible for any one to be anything but good-tempered with such a wife as Madame Gaspard ; she was the very impersonation of cheerfulness, her plump, round face beamed with smiles, and the cherry-coloured ribbons in her cap looked pale beside her ruddy cheeks ; she was talking, with much energy and laughter, and many gesticulations, to a tall, solemn lady in black, Madame Delorme, Marie’s mother, who hardly seemed to appreciate her companion’s vivacity ; but then Madame Delorme was always solemn and preternaturally stiff, a complete contrast and foil to her daughter, who, in her black dress

and crimson carnations, looked irresistibly lovely, as she stood, with Mademoiselle Gaspard, by Madame Olivier's side, and, with the most winning smile on her face, contrived, while talking to the old lady, to keep Monsieur Josef also near her.

Mademoiselle Gaspard, in virtue of her wealth, was considered one of the belles of the little town, and though Marie managed to eclipse her by her own superior beauty,—Julie Gaspard was only moderately good-looking,—many young men preferred Julie, who was not so stately, and did not much mind whom she talked with, provided she *did* talk.

Besides several young men, and some non-entities, with whom we have nothing to do, there was the Curé Monsieur de Solent, a venerable old man, an old friend of Madame Olivier's, who had consoled and comforted her in her many troubles; he stood now by her chair, watching the little group around it with vivid interest; for were they not all his children, and would he not have to give account for them all some day?

The group was well worth studying: Marie Delorme, dressed after a fashion in an old picture, in her square-cut dress, with the glow-

ing crimson carnations in her hair and in a *bouquet de corsage*, knelt by Madame Olivier's side, and was relating Monsieur Josef's morning adventure for everyone's benefit; beside her stood Julie Gaspard, all airy blue and white drapery, half listening to Marie's story and half attending to the pretty speeches that Valentin Lascelles was whispering in her ear. The said Valentin, a distant relation of hers, was reported to be engaged to her; but the engagement had never been made public, so that it might be only a rumour. Monsieur Josef leant on the back of his mother's chair, his eyes fixed on Marie's face; he looked serious, as well he might, for was not his idol making fun of him? Madame Olivier herself seemed disturbed. Marie's story might only be told in good-humoured raillery; but what mother likes to hear her son made fun of, even if ever so slightly.

Monsieur de Solent looked on in silence for a few minutes, and then he came forward.

"My dear friend," he said, "these young people weary you. Give them all something to do and send them all away, and we will have a little quiet chat together, we elders. It is a beautiful night—why not go and breathe the

fresh air in the garden, my children? Mademoiselle Marie, you are looking blooming this evening, but it seems to me that you have heated yourself in relating that little story of my friend Monsieur Josef; let me advise you to try the evening air to cool your cheeks—they are almost *too* brilliant to-night."

Marie rose hastily from her knees, and the colour Monsieur de Solent had condemned deepened considerably as she answered—

"I did not know you were here, Monsieur le Curé;" for she felt the reproof he intended to convey.

"Doubtless you did not, my child. Monsieur Josef, let me recommend you to conduct all these young people into the garden."

Only too glad of an excuse for offering Marie his arm, Monsieur Josef did as he was told, and the young people all went off together.

It was a bright, moonlight night, very warm and pleasant, and the company dispersed amongst the trees and alleys in different directions (the garden was a very extensive one, and had originally belonged to an old château) until Marie and Josef were left alone. They were very silent, Marie, because she felt a little ashamed of herself (she did not in the least

object to hurting her lover's feelings, but she was vexed that her thoughtless jest had slightly displeased his mother, and more, had been reproved by Monsieur le Curé, the only man for whom Marie really felt any respect); and Josef was silent because, although he adored his idol, he felt that she was very unkind, and no one really likes to be made a laughing-stock.

It was not long, however, that Marie remained silent. There was nothing she liked better than a lover's quarrel, providing always that her own feelings were not engaged. So she said in her sweetest voice (and Marie had a beautiful voice always)—

“Monsieur Josef, am I so unfortunate as to have offended you?”

The unfortunate Monsieur Josef felt a thrill go through him as Marie spoke, but he prudently refrained from following the impulse he felt to go down on his knees then and there and tell her that *she could not* offend him, and he only said “It is nothing, Mademoiselle.”

“Ah, that means that you will not forgive me, Monsieur Josef,” and Marie sighed gently.

“Mademoiselle! I—I—assure you”——

“No matter, Monsieur Josef. I see you are

still vexed. I am not accustomed to ask for forgiveness twice. I was thoughtless, I admit, and I jested at your expense. I can do no more than ask to be forgiven; but, as you wish to quarrel, do so by all means. *I* intend to sit here by the fountain, leave me to myself if you please, and walk where you like," and with the air of an offended empress Marie withdrew her hand from Monsieur Josef's arm, and seated herself on a bench close to the little fountain which was leaping and sparkling in the moonlight.

Monsieur Josef's newly acquired prudence was not proof against that, he was down on his knees in an instant on the damp grass by the fountain's edge—it might have been ice, he would not have felt it.

"You cannot be so cruel as to bid me leave you, Mademoiselle Marie," he cried, "*I* forgive? it is you who of your angelic goodness must forgive *my* folly—my presumption in daring to feel hurt at anything you can do or say. Forgive me, only say you forgive me!"

"On condition that you promise never to be offended with me again."

"Who could be offended with *you*?"

"Not you, Monsieur Josef, I hope. I am your sister, remember, and I claim the right to say what I please."

"Say—do—anything you please, only do not call me your brother, Mademoiselle Marie. Something much nearer, much dearer, I would be to you."

"Nay," and Marie spoke coldly and rose from the bench, "I had better return to the house, Monsieur Josef, you know I can never be aught but a sister to you. If not that I can be nothing."

"Sister—friend, anything," cried Monsieur Josef in despair, "only stay, do not go in, stay and talk to me I entreat you."

Marie allowed herself to be persuaded, but with great apparent reluctance, and Monsieur Joseph, sitting by her side, now began a long and eager recital of all his plans for the summer, and the alterations he was thinking of making in his house and garden, and Marie listened attentively (she liked power, even in such a small way as this) and gave advice, which was listened to with an eagerness that might have touched her had she been thinking of anything but her own gratification.

Presently the voices of Julie Gaspard and the others sounded in the distance, and Marie rose hastily; as she did so a carnation fell from her dress to the ground. Monsieur Josef stooped and picked it up.

"I do not want it," she said coquettishly; "throw it away."

But Monsieur Josef answered quietly, "It is my sister's; it is therefore sacred, and shall never leave me;" and just pressing the flower to his lips, he put it carefully away in his pocket-book.

"I will not wear it in my coat, much as I should like it," he said, "because others might see it and fancy you had given it to me."

And as Marie saw the delicacy that would not accept as a favour that which another man would surely have boasted of, her heart misgave her, and she felt that she was playing a cruel game. She did not love him, and she was leading him on every day to love her more dearly, under the shallow pretence of a sisterly friendship. For one moment she repented, and then all her coquettish nature returned, and she said to herself, "Bah! he is but a man after all, and have I not vowed to revenge myself, not only on Lewis Daryl, but on all men

for his sake. What is it to me if this one suffers a little; have not *I* suffered before now?" and taking Monsieur Josef's arm, she rejoined the others, and all together returned to the house.

CHAPTER IV.

GABRIELLE'S life was a very monotonous one; her mother thought her too young to go into society, and as there were no girls of her own age living within anything like a reasonable distance of the manor-house, she was very lonely.

Mrs. Wylde, between dosing and complaining, was far too much occupied to attend to her daughter or care for her society, so Gabrielle was left entirely to herself. Fortunately hers was a cheerful nature, and though sometimes she felt her position keenly, she always made the best of it. She was fond of painting, and sketched well, and on fine days she walked as far as she could with "Faust," the large black

retriever, as her companion, and spent an hour or two very happily in sketching.

One bright sunny day she left home directly after breakfast, with the intention of going to sketch a waterfall about a mile off. The morning was lovely, the sky cloudless, and the air very warm, for it was the height of summer.

Gabrielle felt in a very happy mood ; she was content with small things, and in her way she was going to enjoy herself. Her road lay through a wood at the very extremity of her father's grounds ; the shade was very cool and refreshing after the hot sun ; and Gabrielle walked very slowly with Faust, who was keeping a sharp look-out for any stray rabbit that might cross his path close beside her. A brook ran through the wood, and Gabrielle followed its course until she reached the waterfall.

It was a lovely spot, the trees almost met overhead, the sunshine falling through their branches in chequered light on the tossing foam beneath, where the little brook leaped down from a height of about three feet over a rough heap of stones ; ferns and mosses grew in every nook and cranny of the rough bank, and at the foot of the old trees whose roots reached into the brook. Deep clear shadows of rich

brown lay beneath the bank, where the speckled trout slept lazily on the water, or awakening to the consciousness of a breakfast to be had for a little exertion, darted after the flies that skimmed the surface of the stream. Gabrielle sat down on the bank, on the root of an old tree which formed a convenient seat. The waterfall was within a dozen yards of her, the very place for a sketch of its beauties, but the air was so warm and she felt so tired, that, although she opened her book and prepared her colours, and even went so far as to fill a little tin cup with water, she felt too dreamily inclined to do anything but sit and think, with her brushes idle in her lap; the noise of the waterfall was just loud enough to be soothing, and there was so much beauty around her that it seemed impossible to work, so Gabrielle leaned back against the tree and gave herself up to enjoyment. She sat so still that the inhabitants of the wood were deceived into thinking her an inanimate object, and came out of their holes and corners to their usual avocations; a large water-rat came swimming slowly up the stream close to Gabrielle's feet; a kingfisher in gorgeous plumage perched fearlessly on a branch by her side, and she watched,

holding her breath lest she should frighten him, while he stood immovable, his eyes fixed on the stream below, and then darted down, one flash of emerald and gold in the sunlight, and came up again with a little fish in his beak, which he gobbled down with all the gratification of an epicure; and then a great emperor butterfly settled on an oak tree close by, his splendid wings now blue-black, now purple in the sunshine; some little mice ventured out from a hole hard by, but these seemed afraid of Faust, who, although asleep at his mistress's feet, might be an enemy for what they knew, and they ran back in a great hurry. Beetles ran about in all directions, apparently very busy in their several ways; the whole place seemed alive, and all its inhabitants working, and it gave Gabrielle a curious sensation to think that all this life had been going on for years, without her noticing it, and would go on for years more without being affected by her life or death. It set her thinking; to her inexperienced eyes it seemed that all this life was so much waste, never to be seen perhaps by the eyes of man, or perhaps to be of use to him, but she knew that in each action of each and all those little creatures, there was some wise purpose to

be fulfilled, which God had ordained should be done by these His servants who "do His pleasure." How much more obediently than His human servants to whom has been given so much more !

Gabrielle was following out this train of thought, her small white fingers smoothing Faust's curly black head the while, when a low growl from the dog startled her.

"Faust, be quiet, sir; don't you know your own mistress' hand?" she said caressingly; but Faust had heard a strange footstep which the noise of the waterfall hid from Gabrielle, and he started up barking sonorously. At the same moment Gabrielle's large gipsy hat was violently snatched off her head, and before she could look round and see how it had happened, she heard a pleasant voice exclaim, "Well, I've caught something now! Good gracious, what's this? some one's hat; what *have* I done?" and looking up, Gabrielle saw on the bank some few feet above, her unfortunate hat dangling in the air from the end of a fishing-rod, and the fishing-rod was in the hands of a young man whose face of confusion and dismay was worth seeing. There was nothing for it but to laugh, and as the young man came down the

bank precipitately, with a profusion of confused apologies, Gabrielle laughed so heartily that it was infectious, and the young man could not help joining in.

"I really don't know what to say," he said smiling. "I'm afraid I have done some irreparable mischief, but you see it was purely accidental. I am staying at Colonel Heyton's, and he told me I might come and fish in this stream. I had caught nothing, and was walking along up there whipping the water, and I am sorry to say not quite looking where I went, for I was growing tired of my non-success, when I felt something catch my fly, and up came your hat! I am so sorry, and I hope I am not trespassing," he added courteously. "I fancied this was still the stream belonging to Colonel Heyton."

"You were right; you might more fairly say that I am trespassing," answered Gabrielle; "but I think Colonel Heyton will not prosecute me, for he is an old friend of my father's; indeed, their estates join."

"Forgive me for asking, but are you Miss Wylde?"

"Yes, I am Gabrielle Wylde."

"Then we are distant cousins," exclaimed

the young man. "My father married a second cousin of your father's, but there was some quarrel between the families, I believe, so that I never saw Mr. Wylde. I have been an orphan for a good many years now, and these last two years I have been abroad; but I always intended to call upon Mr. Wylde when I came to stay with Colonel Heyton (who is my first cousin on my father's side). I suppose your father would not keep up the old family feud, would he? Anyway, we are cousins. Miss Wylde, will you shake hands in acknowledgment of our relationship?"

And the young man held out his hand.

"Indeed, I am very glad to find I have a cousin," said Gabrielle, smiling frankly as she shook hands, "but I should like to know my cousin's name."

"Miles Lillingston."

While he spoke, Miles had been making futile endeavours to disentangle the fishing-hook from the veil of Gabrielle's hat, which he still held in his hand.

"I am really afraid I shall have to leave the hook in," he said at last, "and cut it from the line. I am afraid I shall spoil your veil if I try to pull it out."

"Never mind," said Gabrielle, laughingly ; "it is not of the slightest consequence if you do spoil it."

And the hook came out with a little piece of the grey veil hanging to it.

Miles cut the hook off the line, and put it carefully in a large pocketbook which he drew from his pocket.

"I shall keep it, Miss Wylde, to remind me of our first meeting — although I shall not *need* to be reminded," he added, under his breath.

"Ah ! you little thought that instead of a trout you would find a cousin," laughed Gabrielle, who, partly perhaps owing to her French education, felt perfectly at ease with her cousin already. "I think I must go home now ; it must be lunch-time, and they will be vexed if I am late."

"May I see you home ?"

"Thank you, but I have a guardian here ; and, perhaps, if you are coming to call on my father some time, it will be best to—to call later. The fact is, Mr. Lillingston, my father is rather fond of ceremony, and he might not like it if you called so early."

Gabrielle blushed rosy red as she spoke. The

truth was, poor child, she knew well that father would object to Mr. Lillingston (a stranger to him) accompanying her home ; but she did not like to say so ; hence her little ruse, which was, however, a very transparent one.

“Then it might be better policy to call in the afternoon, in case the ‘family feud’ should be revived ; so I suppose I must say ‘Good morning,’ Miss Wylde.”

“Good morning ;” and Gabrielle sprang lightly up the bank, and was soon out of sight—Faust running after her in great glee, and making the woods re-echo with his delight at being again in motion.

“What a sweet-looking girl ! and so refreshingly unsophisticated, too. She must be very young,” soliloquised Miles, as he still stood where Gabrielle had left him. “I really think hazel eyes are *the* most beautiful eyes there are ; and what a pure complexion ! I wonder if that old Tibbs can get on without me at home a little while longer. This seems to be a pleasant place, and pleasant people here, too. Jack Heyton’s a pleasant fellow in his way. I only wonder I never found him out before. I’ll have him to stay with me when I go back *home*, which won’t be yet, if Mr. Wylde does

not keep up the family feud. I don't know what it was about. Ha! there's a trout! What a splendid fellow! but I've no fly on my line——. I never saw more lovely eyes."

And as fish are not celebrated for the beauty of their organs of vision, we may fairly infer that the concluding speech applied to Gabrielle, and that Miles was in a fair way towards thinking a little more of that young lady's personal appearance than an hour's acquaintance seemed to warrant. He walked thoughtfully homewards along the stream in an opposite direction to that taken by Gabrielle, and, thanks to his abstraction, he managed to meet with so many obstacles, and entangle his fishing-rod so often in the trees and brushwood, that it was quite late when he reached home, and Colonel Heyton had begun to think that something must have happened to him.

CHAPTER V.

"My dear," said Mrs. Wyld to her husband at dinner, on the day when Miles called upon

the squire, "you are not going to encourage that young Lillingston to come here, I hope?"

"Why not?"

"Well, my dear, he is a very forward young man, to begin with, or he would not have presumed to come here at all; and, really, he is not—well, I don't exactly know what to say, but I don't fancy his coming often, as I am sure he intends to do."

Now Mr. Wylde, who was really an unsociable man, had been mentally execrating Miles for calling upon him, and forcing him either to make himself ridiculous by falling back upon the old dispute, or to invite him to his house and treat him as a relation, and he had felt very much inclined to dislike the young man thoroughly for putting him in such a predicament. As soon, however, as he heard his wife's opinion, he went round the other way with the velocity of a weather-cock.

"As to his coming often, Mrs. Wylde," he said stiffly, "that will of course depend upon himself. For my part, I like the young man and like his manners to. I gave him *carte blanche* to come when he liked, and I shall be glad if he avails himself of my permission. There is nothing against him, he is rich, well

born, and well educated, and whatever you may think about him I must beg that you behave to him as politely as you would to any other guest."

"I knew it!" and Mrs. Wylde nodded her head triumphantly, "I knew you would patronise that young man, Mr. Wylde; it is only what I expected. Of course it's not for *his* sake. I always knew you admired his mother, and this Miles has just her eyes. Oh! yes, you may look astonished and wonder how I found out—you used to admire her, you can't deceive me!" and she looked at her astonished husband.

He certainly had never been guilty of admiring any one, not even his wife, and Mrs. Wylde knew this perfectly well, but she was in a complaining mood as usual. She had heard that the late Mrs. Lillingston was extremely beautiful, and also that Mr. Wylde had once transacted some business for her before her marriage, and that was quite enough. But Mr. Wylde was not a man to stand any nonsense. As soon as he recovered from his surprise at the unexpected attack, which certainly had taken him somewhat aback, he said harshly—

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Joanna; if you cannot talk sense you had better not speak at all."

Whereupon Mrs. Wylde burst into tears (which she could always do on the shortest notice) and swept out of the room.

"And your father ought to be ashamed of himself to try my nerves as he does," she said to Gabrielle when the latter joined her after dinner in the drawing-room; "but he has no feeling; men never have. Just throw that shawl over me, child, and then you can play me something soothing, and sing too, if you like, and perhaps I shall go to sleep; and Mrs. Wylde settled herself comfortably on the couch, muttering to herself as she closed her eyes, "*Carte blanche*, to come when he likes, indeed. I must put an end to that at once. How can I go to sleep comfortably on the sofa if I know that young man is coming in whenever he likes; through the window, I daresay; so inconsiderate; but there, they are all alike."

Gabrielle, enchanted by her mother's order (for, usually, Mrs. Wylde "had a headache, and could not bear noise," when Gabrielle wished to play), sat down to the piano in a very happy mood; her mother's professed dislike to Miles

did not trouble her in the least, for Mrs. Wylde's opinions would shift round without the remotest reason in the shortest possible space of time ; and it was so pleasant to hear that Mr. Wylde liked the young man, and that Gabrielle herself would see him often ; she did so long for some companion of her own age, poor child ! “ and it would be like having a brother,” she said to herself as she played and sang, at first softly ; but as she saw her mother had dozed off, the young fresh voice rose more boldly, and she ventured upon one or two old French songs, beginning with her favourite “ *La fiancée d'Appenzell* :

“ Venez, O mes compagnes,
Venez, voici mes plus beaux jours,
Venez, sur les montagnes,
Venez, chanter l'amour.”

As she sang the words, she remembered Marie's comment upon them, “ Love ! love is not worth a song ! ” and she wondered if she, too, would come to that conclusion some day. “ I think not,” she said softly to herself. “ If I were Marie I think I should forgive Louis Daryl ; but then I have not been tried ; but I think if I ever loved any one as she loved him, I should never feel angry with them, however

cruelly they might behave;" and, somehow, a vision of Miles Lillingston's face rose before her—the winning smile, the brown eyes, that reminded her of the shadow in the stream, so clear was their colour, at once dark and bright; and the thought arose, "*he* would never have behaved as Louis Daryl did, I am sure"—rather a rash assurance, considering that Gabrielle had only seen Miles twice, and surely irrelevant, for what had Miles to do with the subject? Nothing whatever, and what could have made her think of him? and as she asked herself the question, Gabrielle rose somewhat suddenly from the music-stool, and sought the garden. The night was beautiful. The air was laden with the scent of the roses and honeysuckles that grew round the windows and up the walls of the house. The silence was almost oppressive. Gabrielle could hear the crickets chirping, and the sharp "click" made by a little bat which skimmed past her in search of its supper; and then a fat drowsy old beetle went past with a booming sound, and, in his awkwardness, flew straight up against Gabrielle's head, and fell to the ground heavily, where he lay on his back, every now and then feebly kicking his legs,

but not attempting to get up again. A great moth hovered round the honeysuckle blossoms, intent upon a supper of nectar and ambrosia; and then, all at once, a nightingale began to sing, and her song was so entrancing that Gabrielle's thoughts went with it right up into the clear starry skies, such a flood of glorious music it was, and it seemed to come straight from the little singer's heart. When it ceased there was a silence in the air, as if everything waited in expectation of hearing those heavenly sounds again. Then there was a footstep on the gravel walk; a voice said, "Good evening, Miss Wylde; you see I am like a bad shilling—I am come back again. I quite forgot to give Colonel Heyton's message to Mr. Wylde;" and with a start Gabrielle came down again to the earth.

"Mamma is in the drawing-room," she said.
"Will you come in?"

"Thank you, I have seen Mrs. Wylde, and she sent me out here to you, telling me that Mr. Wylde would join me presently, but that he was busy just now. What a lovely evening!"

"Yes; did you hear the nightingale? Hush! it is singing again."

They were both silent as the sweet bird-voice

rose again on the air. When it ceased, Miles gave a deep sigh.

"It seems a very sad song to me," he said.

"Nay, it is a song of praise, Mr. Lillingston—a rapture of happiness, which words can never express so well."

"Ah ! to *you*, who have a home, a father and mother who love you, everything, doubtless, seems but a reflection of your own happiness—but to me, who have lost father, mother, and home, it seems very different."

Gabrielle looked up quickly; her thought was, "I am as lonely as you are in reality;" but all she said was—

"You have many friends, surely !"

"*Friends !* Whom do you call *friends*, Miss Wylde ? I have many acquaintances ; I have a large fortune, a beautiful estate, and a pleasant old house, but I have no one to love me ; there is no one to approve or disapprove of my actions ; no one to say do this or do that. My house is no *home* to me, for there is no one to welcome me there—nothing but the remembrance of my dear mother's smile and loving voice. Out of all the love that encircled my childhood, I have nothing left but a memory."

Gabrielle looked up in his face, and there

were tears standing in her eyes. With frank and childlike sympathy she laid her hand in his.

"We will care for you. You shall not be so lonely any longer," she said ; and as the young man looked into the innocent face, so full of sorrow for him, he said almost involuntarily, "You are an angel."

Gabrielle did not take in his speech in the least, she only said, "Tell me about your mother," and Miles told her of his childhood, of his mother's beauty and goodness.

"She had a face something like yours, Miss Wylde, but her eyes were brown ; she had your smile. When I met you for the first time I fancied your face seemed a familiar one—it was the likeness to my mother that I saw."

The sweet, serious eyes were raised to his.

"I am so glad, for your mother was so good ; I should like to resemble her."

"And you will be a sister to me ?"

Oh, Miles, Miles, you were not quite frank when you said that !

"Yes," answered Gabrielle simply, and so the compact was made.

Presently Mr. Wylde came in search of Miles, and then they all three returned to the house ;

and although Mrs. Wylde was very much put out at first, she was not proof against Miles's attention, and the evening was a pleasanter one than Gabrielle had passed for many long days. Mr. Wylde even went so far as to praise his daughter's singing, which piece of condescension, unfortunately, had the effect of making her so nervous that she sang worse than she had ever done in her life.

"After all, perhaps Marie is right, and I am to be happy."

Gabrielle was in her own room when she thus gave utterance to her thoughts: "How kind Mr. Lillingston is, and how handsome! Ah! if he were really my brother! But I must not be dissatisfied; it will be pleasant to see him often. He said he was coming to-morrow. Poor fellow, how lonely he must be!"

Ah, Gabrielle, take care! Pity is near akin to love—not such love as you—a child still in thought and feeling—would imagine, but a love entire, absorbing, self-sacrificing, such as some few—those only who have hearts so pure, so true as yours, Gabrielle—can feel—a love, alas! seldom appreciated in this world by those who call it forth, for by some odd contradiction it is often the most worthless who are most beloved—

perhaps because they need so sorely the prayers and tears that those who love them offer up on their behalf. How many heartfelt prayers—how many bitter tears may you have to shed in your life, Gabrielle! Take care, then, how you bestow your love, for a love like yours once given will never be taken back. Not all the sins in the world—not forgetfulness, not cruelty, not desertion—can ever make your love fail in its devotion to its object when once your heart is given. It is a hard truth, but none the less true because it *is* hard, that such single-hearted devoted love is seldom fully returned; but may it not be to teach us that ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive,’ for not all the love that *could* be showered upon a human being can make him so happy, so blessed, as the love he himself feels for another, for nothing so purifies and ennobles the heart of man as true unselfish love.

CHAPTER VI.

MARVILLAIS, the small town where Marie Delorme lived, was a quaint old place in sunny

Provence; it boasted a very old and beautiful chapel, dedicated to the Virgin, but beyond this there was nothing at Marvillais to tempt a tourist to a long stay; there were no celebrities, no lions; there was not even a guide to show you over the old chapel; and what English tourist would appreciate a sight unless he had paid money to see it? The place, therefore, was an extremely quiet one, and entirely unfrequented by strangers. The people were primitive for the most part, and cared little for the doings of the world beyond the gates of their own little town; and yet for all its insignificance, a summer in Marvillais was very pleasant, and the little town had beauties of its own which were not to be despised. True, there were no cathedrals, no well-built bridges, or old palaces and picture galleries; but there were groves of orange trees just outside the town gates, and sweet-scented citrons, with their dark green leaves, grew in the open fields; there was a rough wooden bridge over the river, and its effect was more picturesque than if it had been a more imposing structure designed with a view to the glory of the architect; the river flowed through the midst of the town, dividing it in two parts, and just

beyond the town, about a mile lower down than the bridge, there was a ferry-boat in which you might cross for a few centimes. Hills, clothed with vines and olives, rose immediately behind Marvillais, their beauty and freshness worth all the old masters in the world ; what picture gallery, with all its varied scenes from different lands, could find one painting to surpass the view from the old chapel tower? It burst upon you with all its beauty when, having ascended the time-worn belfry stairs, you emerged on the tower parapet, where, if you had pretty good nerves, was safe standing-room. Beneath you lay the town, with its quaint houses, hardly two alike in the whole place—gable ends, wooden buildings, fragile to look at, but enduring well the wear and tear of time and the rough usage of wind and weather ; red-tiled, low-roofed houses ; slated cottages ; thatched cottages ; in short, every variety you could imagine ; and the Rhone, with its blue waters, gliding through the midst of them, and losing itself—a silver line in the distance—amongst vineyards, woods, and hills ; the little boats on the river, the clean, well-kept streets, with their rows of trees ; the beautiful gardens which the towns-

people vied with one another in maintaining, full as they were of brilliant blossoms, seeming, as you looked down upon them, like a coloured mosaic, made up together a lovely picture.

Descend the stairs again ; enter the chapel by a side door ; no guide meets you demanding a fee and volunteering an explanation you would rather dispense with ; but the little chapel, with its carved oak ceiling (carvings rich and rare ; said, by the mayor, to be by some wonderful artist, whose name, alas ! for the fame of this world ! has been forgotten) ; its stained glass window, over the altar, of the Virgin and Child ; its calm air of peace and repose—impresses you far more than a show place would do. The doors are always open, and the chapel is seldom empty ; a market-woman with her basket, her child in her hand, comes in and kneels to ask a blessing on her work, a simple homely prayer, but to Him who has said that He hears the prayers of the simple and humble heart, who shall say that it is unacceptable ?

Here a rough peasant who has come into the town to buy medicine for his sick wife, prays—the tears streaming down his toil-worn face—for her who has laboured so long and faith-

fully by his side on the rough pathway of life. All who have some grief to bear, or joy to be thankful for (and who has not one or the other?) may come here and lay down the burden on their hearts—here, in the sacred stillness, away from the bustle and struggle of every-day life; and after their prayers, when the market woman goes back to her business, the peasant to his home, may not that prayer, that moment snatched from the world and given to God, that peace which fell upon their troubled hearts in the quiet, restful calm of the old chapel retain its influence over them throughout the day?

There is one figure in the chapel which we have not yet noted. Marie Delorme knelt in a dark corner, where she would have been unseen had not a stray sunbeam found her hair and wakened it into gold, making a "sunshine in a shady place." She looked pale, but her eyes shone with a bright feverish light as she raised them to heaven, her hands clasped the while in earnest prayer.

Presently she rose and went out. At the door she met the old peasant we have just seen.

"Jean," she said, "I was wishing to see you. How is Margot to-day?"

“As bad as she can be to be alive,” answered the old man, shaking his head.

“Ah, mademoiselle, it is hard that she cannot wait for me, when we have lived together for so many years—forty years at the feast of St. Pierre next—and now she will leave me alone!”

“Nay, Jean, she will get better. This lovely weather will do her good.”

“No, mademoiselle. She said to me last week, ‘When the orange-blossoms fall, my friend, I shall fall too; they bloomed when I was born; I shall die when they fade;’ and mademoiselle knows that is often the case; the orange-blossom was her birthday flower; for fifty years I have never failed to gather her a bouquet of them on her birthday. Alas! there will be none to place on her grave! Well, we shall not be parted long.”

“And death is not so cruel a divider as falsehood and mistrust,” said Marie, abstractedly. Then rousing herself, “I will take Margot some good soup,” she said; “no doubt she requires a good deal of nourishment.”

“God bless you, mademoiselle, for your kindness!” And Jean took off his cap, with a bow worthy of a cavalier of olden times.

Marie walked on slowly and thoughtfully

after the old peasant had left her. Presently she met the curé, Monsieur de Solent.

"You look sad, my child," was his salutation—"What has afflicted you?"

"I have just met père Jean, Monsieur le curé; he tells me his wife, Margot, is dying."

"True, my child, but she is willing to go."

"It seems so sad that they, who love each other so well, should be parted," said Marie, with a sigh; "there is so little true love in the world.

"They will not be parted for long," answered Monsieur de Solent, gently. "You were not grieving for that, my daughter?"

"Not only that"—and Marie's eyes filled with tears—"my life is not a happy one."

"It rests with you to make it so."

"How?"

"Joseph Olivier loves you, Marie; marry him; and in making him happy you will become happy yourself. Nay," he added, as the girl drew herself up with a gesture of disdain, "why should you despise him? True, you are young, beautiful, and clever, but he has qualities which you have not. Where you are fickle, careless, proud, disdainful, he is true and faithful, humble and patient. I have seen with

sorrow of late, Marie, that you have been more than usually unkind to him; he does not deserve it at your hands. Think of the years in which his love has never wavered; not all your coldness and cruelty have availed to change it. He might marry almost anyone in the town, and he chooses you—you, who will be almost portionless, and instead of gratitude he finds *scorn*, instead of affection, *hatred*. Is this right, Marie? Is it like her whose name you bear, our blessed Mother in heaven, to treat thus lightly the love and the devotion of a lifetime?"

"I cannot control my affections, Monsieur le curé; if I cannot love him, well, I cannot, and there is an end of it." And Marie's superb eyes almost flashed in her anger as she spoke.

"Then do not encourage him one moment and be cold the next, which is what you have been doing of late; that is unlike a true woman, Marie. Better tell him at once honestly that you do not care for him, than keep him in suspense as he is now."

"I have told him so."

"Yes, in words, but there are other languages than that of the tongue—a flower given,

a kind look, these will lead a man to hope when words tell him to despair."

"Then he has told you that I gave him a flower," cried Marie indignantly.

"He has told me nothing, but I have not watched you both without drawing my own conclusions. You are playing a hard and cruel game, Marie Delorme, and as your spiritual father, I am bound to tell you so. It has saddened me much to see my little Marie, who in her childhood was almost a little saint, become hard, and cruel, and treacherous."

"Ay, I was a saint *once*," said Marie passionately. "I *did* love, I *was* faithful and true, but the man I loved deserted me for money and for rank—what faith in man, what love, can I have left now?"

She turned upon Monsieur de Solent impetuously.

"Heaven has never deceived you, Marie, and you can still love God, and in time you will become softened—when time has blotted out that ill-fated love from your heart. My daughter, pray and become humble, try to act rightly, and you will be happy; meanwhile, if you continue to behave as you have done to Monsieur Josef, you will bring down some heavy

punishment on your head. Adieu, my child ; think over my warning."

They had reached Madame Delorme's door, and clasping Marie's hand with a murmured benediction, the curé went his way. Marie looked after him. "He is very good," she said to herself, "but he has never loved—he knows not what it is to be forsaken ; he has never hated—he knows not what it is to wish for revenge. Marry Monsieur Josef indeed ! why should I ? No ; I will do better than that, I hope. Marry a young doctor who has hardly any practice as yet ! No ! no ! if I cannot marry for love I will marry for riches and position." And with this resolution Marie entered the schoolroom, where she daily went through the martyrdom of giving singing and music lessons to her mother's pupils, for the holidays were over now, and Madame Delorme and her daughter were occupied all day with their pupils. None of them were residents, however (Gabrielle Wylde had been an exception to the rule), for Madame Delorme's house was not large enough to admit of it. There was no Monsieur Josef to look over the garden wall to-day when Marie paced the little garden with all the children playing round her, and as this

was the first day of lessons after the holidays, it seemed more wearisome to Marie than ever, and when at length the evening came and she could rest, her thoughts flew to Gabrielle, who was most likely enjoying herself. Ah! how unequally the good things of this world were divided!

Madame Delorme was invited to spend the evening with Madame Gaspard, and Marie, as in duty bound, accompanied her; but she did not enjoy her evening, she hardly knew why. Valentin Lascelles was there and was extremely attentive to her; and Monsieur Josef was there too, but he seemed to be suddenly taken with Julie Gaspard's beauty, stood by her at the piano, was her partner at cards, and in short attached himself to her all the evening; and when Madame Delorme rose to go home, it was Valentin who escorted her and her daughter to their house; and Monsieur Josef, after a cold "Good-night, mademoiselle," returned to his place by Mademoiselle Julie's side.

"Ah! you have done very well indeed, Monsieur Josef," cried Madame Gaspard cheerily, when they had left. "That was a good thought of mine, you see; she is quite aston-

ished at your behaviour, depend upon it, *mon cher*, there is nothing like a little jealousy sometimes. Julie, if Marie Delorme were a man you would be called out. Oh, the look she gave you as she left the room! I suffocated with laughter. Never fear, Monsieur Josef, she loves you, I am sure."

"You do not think she is angry, Madame Gaspard?" faltered poor Monsieur Josef, whose little ruse had been played in great trepidation, and who probably would have given up long before the evening was over if Madame Gaspard had not kept watch over him.

"Angry? I should think so indeed. Of course she is; but what of that? Why I remember, years ago, when Monsieur le Maire there"—and she glanced at her husband, who was sitting near, listening to every word she said—"was in love with me, and I would not listen to him, that *he* tried to make me jealous. Ah! was I not angry then! But I took him to task roundly for it, and all he said was, 'Well, little one, if thou dost not like my paying attention to other girls, take me for thy husband at once, and then thou canst not be jealous of me any more; for look thou, if *thou* wilt not listen to me, others will.' So I took him at once, and

we have never quarrelled from that day to this. Ah! Alphonse, *mon ami*, thou art drinking too much wine, that little sour wine will disagree with thee; I cannot allow it." And the voluble little woman shook her head at her husband, and jumping up, took away the glass of *vin ordinaire* which he was about to drink, to which piece of tyranny Monsieur Gaspard submitted very quietly, for though in the town he was "Monsieur le Maire," at home he was only "Madame's husband," a position which seemed to agree with him, judging from his contented appearance, and rotundity of figure. He was a worthy man, and much beloved by all the inhabitants of Marvillais. When Madame Gaspard had finished speaking, he smiled contentedly.

"You see what you will come to some day, Monsieur Josef," he said with a laugh to the young man.

"What! you are going already? Give my best compliments to madame, your mother, and tell her that my little wife here will not give me a chance of sending for you officially; she takes too good care of me, as you see." And he laughed heartily at his own joke.

Monsieur Josef responded by a feeble smile.

He felt very much depressed; Marie was so evidently offended with him, and he felt as if he had behaved very foolishly all the evening. He felt very despondent as he walked home in the moonlight, and, arrived at home, although he went into the garden, he dared not play his guitar as usual. "Ah! if she but knew how much I love her," sighed the poor fellow, as he sat and gazed at the light in Marie's window, "she could not be so cold, so cruel. And yet she is not always so cold; that evening when she came to us she was kindness itself. Ah! Marie, my beloved, thou art incomprehensible. Well, I am not worthy of her; what am I after all? a poor, striving doctor; and *she*—she might be an empress, with her glorious beauty, her grace, her dignity. What a queen she seemed to-night beside that little Julie; and I was fool enough to offend her. Ah! if she casts me off entirely it will be only the just reward of my folly; what right had I to act a falsehood—I, who love her so well? and I dare not ask her forgiveness, that would only make matters worse." And with a deep sigh Monsieur Josef left the garden, and retired to his room and his bed, where he spent *a sleepless night* thinking of Marie's anger.

CHAPTER VII.

MARIE was in a depressed state of mind for several days. At length, one day, there being a holiday in the school for some fête or other, she determined to go and visit Margot, and take her the promised soup. Perhaps she thought the walk might raise her spirits. So she set out with a basket on her arm, something like Red Riding Hood of old ; but Marie had no wolf to fear, she only dreaded—she hardly knew why—meeting Monsieur Josef ; but there was not much fear, for at that time of the morning he was usually at home, seeing his patients ; and Marie, consoling herself with this reflection, went tranquilly on her way. It was a long lonely road ; now and then a peasant going to town with a cart-load of vegetables would pass by, and doff his hat to “Mademoiselle,” or some sturdy workman, eating his early meal by the roadside, would wish her good-day, for Marie was well known and beloved amongst the poor ; she never showed her pride to those beneath her in station, and her answers to all these salutations were cordial and sincere, for Marie was glad to be appreciated, as who is not ? But for

the most part the road was lonely, and the only signs of life were the birds that sang in the trees, or the squirrel that crossed the path; it was a walk of some miles, but through such lovely country that Marie could not feel tired. The road was overhung by trees almost meeting overhead, and covered with blossoms; oranges, citrons, and the pointed-leaved almond tree were there, the wax-like flowers of the former crowded with bees, humming and buzzing somewhat noisily in the sunshine; swallows, twittering as they went, flew swift as arrows through the warm air, which was quite heavy with the scent of the flowers. Presently a space in the roadside bare of trees showed Marie a glimpse of the surrounding country—undulating hills, rising one beyond the other in waves of colour, sharply defined vineyards and woods, fading off into purple and warm grey against a blue sky misty with the noonday heat. Marie had to cross the river at the ferry, where the old boatman recognized her with great pleasure, and remarked that it was some time since he had had the felicity of seeing mademoiselle.

It was pleasant on the river that morning, the lazy movement of the boat over the tiny, *crisp waves*, was delightful; there was a sense of

rest in it, that, for the short time it lasted, wrapt Marie in a day-dream of happiness, as brief and, alas, as delusive as day-dreams ever are. The grating of the boat against the steps on the river bank, roused Marie from her reverie, and she paid her fare, sprang lightly ashore, and ran up the old stone steps with almost childish glee; half-a-mile more of walking, and she reached the little cottage.

Jean was working in the garden. It was a pretty little place, the walls of the cottage were smothered with roses and vines, the little garden, trimmed and well kept, crowded with sweet flowers. Jean took off his cap as Marie lifted the latch of the little green gate.

"Ah! you are very good to come so far, Mademoiselle," he said, "you will find Margot in the kitchen."

"She is better then, since she is not in bed?"

"She will never be better, Mademoiselle, but 'la Margot' will never keep her bed while she can sit in a chair. Will it please you to walk in?"

Marie passed through the trellised porch into the little kitchen, and there, in a quaintly covered old oak chair which had been a wedding present from Jean and was his own work,

sat an old woman; she had perhaps the most beautiful face you could see anywhere—a face with straight, pure features, and still brilliant dark eyes, which time had not robbed of their lustre; she wore a white cap, almost like snow in its freshness, and her white hair was worn in two plain bands beneath it, her dress was of brown stuff, her white apron of neat checked muslin, and a silk handkerchief of bright crimson was crossed over her shoulders; she was knitting a dark grey worsted stocking, but when Marie came in she dropped it in her lap.

“Eh! but you are kind to come and see an old woman like me,” she said cheerfully, “You see, I am making haste to knit some stockings for Jean, his are fast wearing out, and he will have no one to knit them for him this winter. Mademoiselle will excuse my working? You see, I want to finish the last pair before I go, and I have not much time now. I can knit and talk too, as Mademoiselle knows.” And taking up her work again as soon as Marie was seated, Margot suited the action to the word.

“Mademoiselle sees those beautiful orange blossoms? Well, Jean walked half-a-mile to get them this morning; they do not grow well just *here*, and he always gets me some when they

are in bloom—he is a good husband is Jean. Ah! it is hard to leave him alone; if my baby had but lived he might be a comfort to his father now.”

“Had you ever a child, Margot? I did not know.”

“Ah! mademoiselle, it was before you were born. Yes, I had one child, a boy, an angel of beauty he was, and I loved him, ah! how much! how much! But it was the will of God to take him when he was but a year old. *Tenez*, mademoiselle,” and Margot opened a drawer in an old chest that stood beside her chair—“this was his little christening frock, ah! what an angel he looked in it! and there is his ball, and see,”—she held up a pair of little worn socks, the last relics of her darling. “I knitted him these, mademoiselle, they were the last pair he wore, and I have kept them all these years; time was, when I opened this drawer, that I could not see my treasures for the tears that blinded my eyes; but now I do not weep, because I shall see my darling soon; there is no need of tears for the dead from my eyes now, but I do weep for the living whom I am leaving alone. Oh! Jean, my husband, my husband! it is so hard to leave thee!” and the old woman

dropped the little socks in her lap and burst into tears.

Marie rose and stood by her, taking her hand in hers.

“Margot,” she said, “you have at least one consolation, you have never been unkind to your husband, you have always loved him, you can reproach yourself with no omission of duty or affection, is not this a comfort, Margot?”

“Ay, Mademoiselle is right; he can never remember a harsh word against me, for I have never said one from the first day when he began to court me. It seems but yesterday, Mademoiselle. I was a pretty girl then, but vain, as most girls are, and he was such a fine young man! Well, as I said, from that day (we met at the feast of St. Pierre; I wore a dark grey dress with cherry-coloured ribbon knots in my bosom) we loved each other, and we never quarrelled once, up to this day; few can say as much as that, Mademoiselle.”

“Few indeed, Margot,” said Marie sadly.

“Ah! but then few have husbands like mine! Mademoiselle knows him a little, but she knows not half his goodness. When my boy died and I was heart-broken, no one can imagine what Jean’s kindness was then; he

was working on a farm two miles off, but he always came home for his meals (though the master would have allowed him to take them there) that I might not feel too dull all day alone, it was two miles, backwards and forwards, in the broiling sun, and he would come in all in a heat with the haste he had made, and when I reproached him for tiring himself, he would say, 'Nay, Margot, one sight of thy face refreshes me for my work,' and Mademoiselle knows that all that love could not fail to comfort me, in time, for my boy's death."

"Yes, Margot, I see that you have had a very happy life," and Marie sighed.

The old woman looked up quickly.

"And Mademoiselle has not?" she said shrewdly. "We make mistakes in life now and then, we women, Mademoiselle; perhaps we love where we are not loved, or our lovers leave us for others, but all comes right some day. Besides, Mademoiselle has many to love her; there must be one who is worthy, and those who are bad enough to cease to care for us are not worth pining for; they are not even worth a thought. Forget the past, Mademoiselle; the world is better than it seems, and there are some good men left, take an old woman's word

for it; and Heaven sends comfort to those who suffer."

"Comfort!" It was all Marie said, but the tone was enough, and then she added, "I must leave you now, Margot, but I shall come again soon."

"Mademoiselle will not find me," the old woman answered quietly; "but if my blessing is worth anything, Mademoiselle has it," and she laid her hand on Marie's head, "and in Heaven then, I will still pray for you. Mademoiselle, adieu, *au revoir dans les cieux!*" Marie stooped and kissed her, too much touched to speak, and slowly left the cottage, unable to do more than bow her head to Jean's salutation as she passed him in the garden.

CHAPTER VIII.

RED RIDING HOOD met the wolf before she reached her grandmother's hut. Marie's wolf overtook her as she was slowly returning from Margot's cottage—a step came swiftly behind her and Monsieur Josef's voice said :

"I never dreamed of meeting Mademoiselle Marie on this lonely road!"

"Monsieur Josef! I thought you were safe at Marvillais?"

"Duty called me away, Mademoiselle; I was sent for to a farm some distance off, where one of the labourers had met with an accident. Need I say that this unexpected pleasure fills me with delight."

"Indeed, Monsieur Josef, I am astonished to hear it."

"And, wherefore, Mademoiselle?"

"Because I thought, and still think, that Monsieur Josef would prefer hastening home to pay his *dette* to Mademoiselle Gaspard."

"Mademoiselle Gaspard is——"

"I beg pardon, I did not mean to say anything. Mademoiselle Gaspard is a charming young lady."

"No doubt, I think so too. And she will make a charming wife for my friend Valentin!"

"So charming that I do not wonder at Monsieur Josef for coveting the prize for himself."

"Who told Mademoiselle that?"

"Your conduct, and my own observations, Monsieur."

"I am flattered that Mademoiselle has condescended to observe my conduct, however she may have misinterpreted it."

"I am not in the habit of misunderstanding you, Monsieur Josef! No! No, Monsieur, and I cannot but applaud your wisdom; Mademoiselle Gaspard will have a portion on her marriage day, accordingly I congratulate you, and now, let us speak of other matters. I have just seen Margot, she seems to be very ill. Have you seen her lately?"

"Yes, but she is beyond my skill."

"It is very sad," said Marie, "Can you do nothing for her?"

"Nothing! alas! I know too well how little medicine can do. Mademoiselle Marie, you must have been joking when you spoke as you did just now of Julie Gaspard, and I have responded in the same tone. I am serious now, and I must tell you what is in my heart."

"No, no, Monsieur Josef, I cannot listen to you now, spare me?"

"Nay, but you must hear me, I insist upon it."

And Monsieur Josef looked so decided and unlike himself that Marie was frightened; she had never seen him in this mood before, and it frightened her."

"Years ago," began Monsieur Josef, his eyes on Marie's face while he spoke, "there were two children who loved each other dearly; no game was perfect to Marie without Josef, no pleasure could be enjoyed by Josef unless Marie were by. Years passed on, and the boy and girl became man and woman. Ah! what a change was there then; the child Marie had been kind and loving; Marie the woman was cruel and imperious; Josef was never by her side as of old, or if tolerated for a moment, was treated with alternate coldness and patronage; Josef's feelings were unchanged, save that the love of the child had deepened into a pure and holy passion; he would have done anything, gone through fire and water, and laid down his life at his idol's feet, if he could but please her; but he could not, although he tried, ah! *how hard* to succeed, so he came to this resolution: he would declare his love to Marie once more, and if she rejected him, he would never see her again, but would withdraw himself from her sight entirely, that she might not be troubled any more."

Monsieur Josef paused; Marie's face was very pale, and there was a set look about her mouth, which he fancied augured ill for him; his love

and his despair got the better of his forced calmness ; he seized Marie's hand—

“ Marie, Marie, give me your love ; promise to be my wife, and you *shall* be happy ; such love, so strong, so enduring, as mine, surely must be returned in the end ? ”

Marie withdrew her hand and stood still.

“ Monsieur Josef,” she said, “ I do not love you, if I know my heart at all. I never shall care for you, except as a sister. I have been told that I am unjust towards you (God forgive me. I am unjust to many, I know), but I am not happy, and if my hand can repair my injustice, if calm affection will content you, have your wish, I will be your wife. I am weary of contention, and my mother continually reproaches me with my unkindness towards you. I am tired of my life altogether. If you still care to make me your wife after this frank confession, so be it, I consent.”

“ It is not possible ! ” cried Monsieur Josef. “ No, Marie, I was too impetuous, you shall not sacrifice yourself. I will think of your happiness before my own. If you do not love me you cannot be happy as my wife.”

But the emotions of the day had softened Marie, and she turned to Josef with a smile,

rather a sad one though—was she thinking of another wooing, years ago ?

“ Monsieur Josef,” she said, and her voice was very soft and low, “ I never retract. I will be your wife ; you are good, you will teach me how to be good. You love me, and perhaps in time I shall find peace.”

Monsieur Josef clasped the hand she held out to him.

“ The devotion of a lifetime shall repay you for your angelic condescension,” he said tenderly and seriously. “ Marie, I ask for nothing from you, dear one, without your permission. I will not even take my privilege as your ‘ *fiancé*,’ and venture to touch your cheek.”

Marie turned towards him.

“ You have a right, Monsieur Josef,” she said, and he stooped and kissed her reverentially.

And the old proverb came to Marie’s mind : “ *Il y a toujours un qui baise et l’autre qui tend la joue.*”

Ah, poor Monsieur Josef, it was indeed true in this case, and how long would Marie’s softened mood last ?

The two walked home together, crossed the ferry (much to the edification of the old boat-

man, who smiled significantly as they left his boat, and counted over the silver pieces Monsieur Josef had given him with a sigh of delight and the words, "*Ah ! jeunes gens, c'est bien le temps d'être heureux !*"), and came through the town side by side.

Madame Gaspard happened to meet them, and her smile of gratification was good to see.

Monsieur de Solent passed, and murmured "God bless you, my children," very much as if he understood all about it; and no doubt he did, for he was a shrewd old man.

And then they reached home, and Monsieur Josef had an interview with Madame Delorme and formally demanded her daughter's hand; and Madame Delorme graciously consented; and Monsieur Josef took his affianced bride in to see his mother; and the old lady, between tears and smiles, hardly knew what she did, and could not at first realise her son's happiness.

Monsieur Josef had begged Marie not to let his mother know that she did not really love him, and was only generous enough to consent to be his wife out of compassion for him, and Marie had replied, "No one but yourself knows that, Monsieur Josef, and no one else ever will."

So Madame Olivier thought in all good faith

that Marie had at length become sensible to Josef's merits, and her delight, so naïvely expressed, was touching even in Marie's eyes.

"My children," she said tenderly, when her first rapture of joy was exhausted, "May you be as happy as I was with my beloved husband. I can ask no more for you both; I do not doubt that you will be, for you love each other, and with love you can always be happy. Kneel, my children, and let a mother's benediction be on your heads."

They knelt beside her chair, and she laid a hand on either head, on Josef's dark curly hair and Marie's golden tresses, and raising her sightless eyes to heaven she blessed them.

Ah! Marie, did not you feel then that you had done wrong, that you were deceiving that guileless spirit, and that the blessing was not for you, but only for the woman that Madame Olivier fancied you to be?

It was evening, and Marie had retired to her room.

"At length," she said to herself as she leant at the open window, "I can think over what I have done. Have I done right or wrong?"—and she answered herself, "I have done right; I have pleased my friends; I have made Josef

happy.” And then conscience spoke out and would not be silenced, and it said, “You have acted a lie to the world, if not to Monsieur Josef, and how will he appreciate the sacrifice you think to make; he loves you, true—but will he be happy with an unloving wife? If you appear to care for him, he will say, ‘She is acting a part.’ If you are still cold, he will in time wish he had not married you. You have done wrong, very wrong.” And as all these reflections came to Marie’s mind, she leaned her head on her hand, and the large tears dropped slowly down from her eyes. The soft evening breeze blew on her face, but it only reminded her of an evening in the past, the evening after Louis Daryl had declared his love. Ah! how sweet the breath of the flowers had seemed then! how glorious the star-lit sky! Everything seemed to reflect her own happiness, and all was bright in the glow of that first fresh love. Alas! how changed everything was now; the flower scents only brought with them the memory of her despised love; the quivering leaves in the garden below sounded like the requiem on her lost happiness.

“And why *lost*?” she questioned in her impatient heart; “what had I done that my hap-

piness should go so soon ? ah, so soon ! I am no worse than other people ; I have never sinned as some have, and yet this heavy punishment has fallen upon me."

Oh, hush, Marie, hush, those thoughts are impious. And yet, alas ! are they not often those that spring to our minds when first we learn what sorrow means ? We feel the blow ; we rebel under the pain with an agonised murmur of " Why did this calamity fall upon *me* ? " Short-sighted mortals that we are ! we cannot see the love and the tender care ; for the blinding dust our falling idols raise ; we will not look up through the heavy clouds of grief and see the sun that still shines behind. Perhaps we loved those " idols of clay " too dearly, too unwisely ; perhaps, instead of the earthly love leading us on to the heavenly love of our Father, we have *abided* with earthly blessings with which we were only meant to *sojourn* for a brief hour. If, when our Father would lead us on from an earthly love to a higher one, we do not follow Him, but linger behind to gaze in adoration (such as should only be given to Him) at the heathen temple we worship, what wonder if it should crumble to pieces before our eyes ? Is it not rather a wonder, that,

instead of only wounding us, it does not annihilate us in its fall? Is it not rather in mercy (that we may learn the changeableness of earthly things) that our trials are sent,—in love and pity,—not in punishment?

Long Marie sat and dreamed on that summer night—dreamed of the past as it *had* been, and the future as it *might* have been; but she never thought of loving the man who loved her; she never dreamed that he would rather she should not be his wife than that she should be an unwilling bride; she knew little of Josef's character as yet, and the perfect knowledge of it was to come with one of her greatest trials. Little did she know that his generosity alone had led him to consent to the sacrifice she was making; for he knew how poor Madame Delorme was, and he could not bear that Marie should be left alone in the world if her mother died. He had hoped she might love him; he had not hoped she would really *marry* him *without* love.

CHAPTER IX.

GABRIELLE was quietly and unconsciously falling in love with Miles Lillingston. He was

continually at the Manor-house; he was very good-looking, and quite an Admirable Crichton in his way; he had read a great deal, and travelled more; he could ride well, shoot, fish, and drive (even the pair of ponies which Mr. Wylde found unmanageable); and (which was the greatest accomplishment of all) he had persuaded Mr. Wylde to allow him to teach Gabrielle to ride, and hardly a day passed that Gabrielle, her father, and Miles, did not ride together. It was no wonder that Gabrielle liked him; her hitherto monotonous life was at an end, and a new life had begun for her from the day on which she first saw Miles.

Summer was fast giving way to autumn; the ripe, brown corn, glowing in the hot sun like waves of burnished gold, awaited the reaper's hand; fruit trees bent to the earth with the weight of their luscious treasures; the woods, as if touched by invisible fingers, changed into new beauty with each recurring day; and at night the yellow harvest moon rose solemnly as a queen, and looked down on a world of beauty and plenteousness. But through all this beauty there ran a vein of sadness, and Gabrielle felt sad although she knew not why.

"Everything is fading," she said to Miles one day when in their daily ride the two were alone together (Mr. Wylde had lingered behind to speak to his baliiff, whose farm they had just passed), "and although every change before the final decay may be beautiful, I do not like it, it saddens me."

"Life is a sad thing at its best," responded Miles, and his deep hazel eyes drew pathetic. "When one feels happiest, sorrow is nearest at hand. I have felt that very keenly to day, Gabrielle."

They had learnt to call each other by their christian names now. Gabrielle looked up quickly in his face.

"What do you mean, Miles?"

"That I must leave you, Gabrielle, I am going away to-morrow."

Gabrielle started violently, and would have slipped off her saddle, had not Miles caught her hand in his, and somehow he forgot to let it go again.

"You do not care for my going away?" he said gently, with his eyes on her face, which had grown deadly white.

"We shall miss you," she said breathlessly.

"We! who does that mean, Gabrielle?"

"Papa and mamma, she likes you now you know, and I am sorry you are going."

"Are you? It is very sweet to me to hear that."

"Of course, I am sorry, we are brother and sister, you know."

"Nothing nearer, nothing dearer than that, Gabrielle?"

The little hand in his trembled, he clasped it closer in his.

"You will not speak?" he said, "you will never be more than a sister to me, then?"

"You are not generous, Mr. Lillingston," she faltered.

"Are *you*? you will not give me one word of hope, and yet I love you. Oh! I cannot tell you how I love you—how I love you! Gabrielle, will you not return my love, not with a sister's affection, but with the love of a wife?"

Gabrielle's fair young face was one rosy blush now, as she raised her soft eyes for a moment, and then dropped them as they met his.

"I did not know I loved you, she said simply.

"Do you know now, my darling?" he said eagerly, "Can you really care for me?"

"Yes," and then they were both silent for a time, for the hearts of both were full. Gabrielle was the first to speak.

"Papa," she said in a frightened tone, "What will he say?"

"I do not think he will be very angry, dearest," said Miles reassuringly, "he must have seen that I cared for you."

And then Mr. Wylde came cantering up, and the lovers were again silent, with a silence far more eloquent than words; it was not until they returned from their ride that Miles found a moment to whisper to Gabrielle, as he lifted her off her horse.

"This evening, I shall come and speak to Mr. Wylde, Gabrielle."

"How restless you are this evening, Gabrielle," said her mother, impatiently, as she lay on the sofa after dinner, and really Gabrielle was like an unquiet spirit; she tried to play, to sing, to read, at least to sit still, but could do neither, she was so much afraid of her father's anger. What if he should send her away, and forbid her ever to see Miles again?

"If you would not mind going into the garden, Gabrielle," said Mrs. Wylde, plaintively,

"I should really be glad, for you have quite upset my poor nerves by fidgetting so."

And Gabrielle went, and paced the garden in a perfect fever of fright; she did not hear a sound; but suddenly, when she had worked herself up to believe that Mr. Wylde had sent Miles away, Miles' arm was round her, and he exclaimed joyously,

"My own Gabrielle, darling! he has consented, on the condition of a two years' engagement; it is a very long time to wait, and I protested vehemently, but it was of no use; you know how decided he is; but there is one drawback, my darling." And Miles drew her closer to him. "I must leave you to-morrow morning."

"Why?"

"To transact some horrid business at home, dearest, and Mr. Wylde insists upon my going. You see I promised my steward, old Gibbs, that I would come and settle matters a little this week; they have had it all their own way at home, and Gibbs says they are cheating right and left, bailiff and servants and all; and Gibbs, who is an honest old man, can't manage them, he says, unless I go down and see about it. I will not stay above a week away, dear

Gabrielle, if I can possibly help it. It seems so hard that we should be parted just when you have learnt to love me, my own."

"It will not be for long, Miles."

And then Miles told her all about his house, and they laid out so many different plans for the future, and built so many ærial castles, that they began to fancy them reality, and in their abstraction from anything mundane, they forgot that there was such a thing as care in the world, and certainly never dreamed it could come to them. And then they parted, for Miles was to leave early the next morning; and so, beneath the evening sky, they looked long and tenderly at each other, for were they not to be parted for a whole long week. There was something wistful in Gabrielle's gaze as her eyes sought her lover's for the last time; was it a presage of coming evil, of the clouds that were to darken their young love which had dawned so brightly? Look well at that dear face, Gabrielle, that in the time of trouble that is coming it may be imprinted on your heart. And you, Miles, keep in your memory the trusting, loving gaze of the "sweetest eyes were ever seen," for you will need some such talisman as that recollection in your approach-

ing trial. With hand clasped in hand, and that long, lingering gaze, the lovers parted—to meet again—When?

After a stiff and formal interview with her father, in which he gave his consent to her engagement with Miles, and another, less formal but far more trying with her mother, in which Mrs. Wylde said,

“She hoped it might turn out well, but she very much doubted it, and she did think Mr. Wylde had been extremely precipitate, the young man was a very pleasant young man, but, beyond his own word, and that of his cousin, Colonel Heyton (who, as a relation was, in a manner bound to uphold him) they did not know whether he might not be a gambler, or an impostor, or have another wife somewhere; and as to Mr. Wylde fancying that because his solicitor had given him a good character he must be all right, it was simply folly. However, it was no use talking, she knew, as she was never considered, she supposed Gabrielle would have to go into society now (ridiculous for a girl to be engaged before she was out), and so a note must be sent to the Paris dressmaker and a dress ordered, and she must have one for herself too, she supposed.

Well, she hoped the child would be happy, and not live to repent it, and if she took care not to be rough, Gabrielle might kiss her."

After this long speech then Gabrielle escaped to her room, where she shed many tears of mingled joy and sorrow. Some dread was upon her but she knew not what. And then, through her open window she heard the swallows chirping a sleepy little twitter from their nest beneath the leaves,—such a peaceful, trusting sound it had, as if they knew no doubt and fear through all the long night, and Gabrielle's heart, ever ready to listen to nature's teaching, was cheered by those little birds, for they brought to her mind the words, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." Why should she dread anything, when those sweet words told her that her Heavenly Father knew what was best for His child and cared for her, and Gabrielle fell asleep with a smile of happy trust on her sweet face that night.

CHAPTER X.

MR. WYLDE had never acted in a hurry in his life,—until now,—and it certainly was unwise to

consent to his daughter's engagement with a man whom she had known so short a time, but he had an idea that it was quite sufficient for the young man to be a relation of his own to answer for him in every way. Besides, he really liked him, in a formal, stiff way, which was the most he could feel of affection.

Two or three days had passed since Miles's departure, when, one morning, Colonel Heyton called at the Manor House. "He wished to see Mr. Wylde alone." He was shown into the library.

"My dear fellow," he began nervously, after shaking hands with Mr. Wylde, and making elaborate enquiries after the health of Mrs. and Miss Wylde, much as if he wanted to put off saying what he had come to say, "I am so very much distressed—I, in fact, I fear that I was greatly mistaken in what I told you the other day."

"What *do* you mean?"

"You asked me for any information I could give you about young Lillingston, and I am afraid that he is not at all what I thought him to be."

Poor Colonel Heyton made another pause, in the vain hope that Mr. Wylde would help him out: not a bit of it. Mr. Wylde sat and

looked straight before him, perfectly immovable and stony. Colonel Heyton cleared his throat nervously, and began again.

“I heard from an intimate friend (a relation, indeed), this morning, and I am sorry to say he gave me a very bad account of my cousin Miles. Daryl (the nephew who wrote to me) was at college with him, and he says—stay—I will read you his letter:—‘My dear Uncle,—Your kindness’—oh, ah, that’s nothing; here, where does it begin? Ah! I have it. ‘No doubt you were pleased with Miles Lillingston. I should have been extremely surprised had you *not* been fascinated, he has such extremely pleasant manners. I feel it to be my duty, however, to warn you of his real character. He and I were at college together, and I am sorry to say that his conduct there was atrocious; he gambled, drank, and behaved altogether so badly that he was rusticated; reprimands and lectures having no effect upon him. I am truly sorry, my dear uncle, to disturb the favourable impression he has made on you; but I feel that I *ought* to speak, and it is enough for me to know that I *ought* to do anything, and no matter *how* painful the duty may be, I fulfil it.’ There, that’s all, and enough,

too. I'm very sorry, very sorry, indeed, Wylde, because, you know, I have been in a measure responsible for him to you; but how could I tell there was anything against him; such a pleasant lad he is, and so like his poor mother. Ah, well."

Mr. Wylde rose slowly from his chair, took a sealed letter from the table, opened it, tore it deliberately to shreds, and sat down again.

"I have never acted upon impulse in my life but once," he said, "and that was when I consented to my daughter's engagement with Miles Lillingston. I will never act upon impulse again."

"Engagement! your daughter Gabrielle! good heavens! Wylde, I had no idea of this."

"Ay, old friend, you little thought Robert Wylde could be such a fool, but he was just so foolish.

"And Gabrielle loves him?"

"She accepted him, I tell you, subject of course to my approval. I had just written to him to tell him that he might come here if he liked next week."

"And now?"

"Now! let him dare to darken these doors again!"

Colonel Heyton sighed; he had been very much taken with Miles.

"Perhaps it is not so bad as Daryl says," he said deprecatingly.

"He must have been rusticated; no one would dare to say so if it were not true, it is so easily found out."

"True; but don't be so hard upon him, as you are on most people, Wylde; *we* were not saints, I dare say, in our young days."

"A gambler and a drunkard," said Mr. Wylde, in a hard voice. "I don't remember being either, Heyton."

"No, no; but it may not be quite so bad."

"Can you rely on your nephew's word?"

"Perfectly; he is one of the best and most prudent men in the world."

"Then there is no more to be said. I will not detain you, Heyton, for I must write to this fellow at once. You will not mention to any one that Gabrielle was engaged to him; it has not had time to get about."

"Trust me; but, Wylde, don't be harsh; give him a trial; let him have a few years' probation."

"Good morning, Heyton. I always settle my affairs myself, you know."

And poor Colonel Heyton was fairly dismissed, and went through the garden with such a vexed, puzzled look on his face that he hardly noticed Gabrielle's cheerful salutation, when he passed her by the gate; and when he reached home, he wrote Miles such a rambling, wandering kind of letter (partly good advice, partly assurances that he never believed all he heard), that it was more like the Irishman's verdict of "We find him *not* Guilty, and hope he won't do it again," than anything else, and it puzzled Miles beyond measure, and led him to think that his friend had taken leave of his senses.

No sooner had Colonel Heyton left the house than Mr. Wylde wrote to Miles,—a cold, bitter letter, telling him briefly that "In consequence of what he had heard of his conduct at college, his engagement with Gabrielle must be broken off, and that he desired him never to attempt to write to her or see her again, as it would not only be utterly useless, but would be visited upon Gabrielle herself with the greatest severity," and in this last clause, Mr. Wylde showed great insight into Miles's character, which was the very essence of generosity. The letter despatched, Gabrielle was summoned to

the library, when her father briefly informed her that he had broken off her engagement; gave her his reasons, and dismissed her hastily; and then he sat alone in his room and thought it all over, and never for one moment dreamed that he was again acting upon impulse.

Miles Lillingston had been rusticated for a foolish jest played off upon the dean, for which Miles himself was not half so much to blame as Louis Daryl, who was the originator of the plot, and had sneaked out of all *active* participation in it, just in time to avoid discovery and punishment, relying on Miles's generosity not to betray him. And now he made use of that one fault (which had been severely and promptly punished) to serve as a foundation on which he could erect a mass of falsehood, all the more dangerous and difficult to disprove because of the atom of truth which leavened it. Louis Daryl had heard of the favour and affection which his uncle had shown to Miles, and fearing that the property he hoped to inherit might be diverted from its "*proper* channel," and left to Miles, he determined to put an end to his fears at once, and, by blackening Miles's character, turn Colonel Heyton against him.

In one way at least the falsehood was successful. Miles (thinking that Mr. Wylde referred to his rustication, and the practical joke which had led to it, knowing, as he did, that he had done nothing else that could be called wrong at College) replied to Mr. Wylde's letter by three long sheets of explanations, entreaties, and assurances, that the joke was a harmless one, and would not have been punished with so much severity had there not been several practical jokes played off upon the unfortunate dean at that time, so that it was thought necessary to make an example of the first offender who could be caught. The only effect of this letter upon Mr. Wylde was to lead him to believe that Miles was guilty of all the sins of which Louis Daryl had accused him, for he evidently allowed the other accusations against him, as he had not attempted to refute them. Mr. Wylde quite forgot that he had never told the unfortunate young man what *were* the accusations against him; so with one more severe and angry letter from Mr. Wylde (in which he forbade Miles to write to him again, and desired him never again to cross his threshold) the correspondence ceased. Miles,—disgusted with everything and

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everybody, shut himself up at home, saw no one, went nowhere, and made himself generally miserable.

And Gabrielle? stunned at first by her father's information, she had been unable to reply; for when she would have spoken to vindicate her lover, something rose in her throat and prevented her speaking, and she was obliged to leave the room. Alone in her chamber, she cried till she could cry no more; then she determined to write to Miles and assure him of her unalterable love, and tell him that nothing should lead her to believe anything against him. And she did write,—a touching letter from her heart,—poor child, telling him, as she would hardly have done had he not been in trouble, how much and how dearly she loved him. “No matter what I may hear of you,” she finished her letter, “I will always be true to you, I will always love you,—I will always pray for you.”

This letter she sent the same morning, but in her hurry and agitation she directed it wrong, and Miles never received the assurance of her love, which would have comforted him so much; and not till long afterwards did Gabrielle know that the letter was lost, for she

had not dated it, so that it was not returned to her. She did not expect an answer, as she knew that her father had forbidden Miles to write, and as he took the precaution to forbid her writing (the day after her letter had gone), she never knew that Miles was wearying for one word from her to tell him that he was not forgotten.

And so ended Gabrielle's dream of happiness, outwardly, at least, but in her heart there could never again be a void, for Miles had loved her; he might grow tired of waiting, in the vague hope that Mr. Wylde might relent, he might change and no longer care for Gabrielle; other eyes would doubtless shine as brightly for him; other hearts might care for him, and he might not be indifferent; but Gabrielle would love him still; neither absence nor coldness, nor change, could ever destroy the love she bore him; the love which, though quickly kindled, could never be extinguished.

She went about her daily occupations somewhat listlessly, receiving every now and then a lecture from her mother on the duty of submission, and the wickedness of rebelling against her parents' wishes (poor Gabrielle had about as much idea of rebelling against her father as

the frightened dove has of flying at the savage hawk), but she strove to appear cheerful, and, in time she succeeded, though her only really happy time was when, alone in her room, she could think of the only being in the world who really loved her. She had no memorial of him but a few withered flowers, but she needed none; that face, those eyes, were too deeply imprinted on her heart for time or change to efface them; and, while Mr. Wylde was congratulating himself on her docility, and beginning to believe that, after all, she had not cared much for Miles, her love grew daily, until she knew and felt that nothing but death could destroy it; and not even death, for beyond the grave she would love him still with a love ennobled and purified by all she had undergone.

CHAPTER XI.

It was market-day at Marvillais, and the principal street, where the market was held, was a very lively scene. Women in bright-coloured woollen dresses (which had been spun by their own

hands, and woven at a little town some twenty miles off) and snow-white caps and aprons, chattered and laughed, and drove hard bargains, meanwhile, over their rolls of creamy butter, fresh eggs, and homespun wool. Piles of ruddy oranges, citrons, and purple grapes; pomegranates—one here and there broken open to show the crimson inside—luscious figs and almonds, sweet and bitter, were piled in heaps in baskets, or on clean cloths on little tables; poultry, alive and cackling, or daintily dressed with parsley, killed and plucked all ready for cooking; olive oil made after some primitive fashion, and fresh olives for those who preferred to make it themselves.

The bright colours, the deep shadows of the old houses, the vivid, glowing autumn sunshine, the animated groups, made a pretty picture and a cheerful one. Its beauty struck Marie's fancy as she stepped out of her mother's house and came suddenly upon it. Close by her house she met Madame Gaspard, who was bargaining with a little dried-up country woman for some butter.

"Good-day, my dear," she called out to Marie, in her cheerful voice; "you see I am doing a little business, I will speak to you di-

rectly ; ” and she went on energetically to the old woman, “ What have you the conscience to ask a pound for this butter, mère Jeannette ? ”

“ Madame sees it is very good, like fresh cream, in fact the best butter in the market ; had it not been so, madame would not have chosen it, but madame knows what she is about.” A chorus of voices from other cheery old women (who did *not* happen to sell butter), “ Ah, yes ; madame knows well what is good,” and much significant nodding. (It was Madame Gaspard’s weak point to fancy herself a connoisseur in all eatables.)

“ Ah, yes, we know all that,” rejoined madame, pretending to frown, but, in truth, flattered ; “ but I asked you the price.”

“ Madame cannot possibly think thirty sous too much,” said mère Jeannette glibly, “ for she knows the prices of things so well.”

“ Thirty sous ! a franc and a-half for that ! ” shrieked Madame Gaspard. “ Mère Jeannette, I thought you an honest woman.”

“ And so I am, madame ; but the butter is good, and I maintain it is worth thirty sous a pound.”

Madame Gaspard raised her hands in horror,

then, seeing another customer coming, she said, quickly, "I will give you twenty-two for it, and that is two too much."

"Madame is very hard upon me, let us say twenty-six, madame, and it is done."

"Twenty-four, not a sou more."

"Well, well, madame must have it, as she is an old customer, but do not let anyone know, madame—I should be ruined outright."

And so the bargain was concluded, and Marie looked on with an amused smile, as the butter was transferred to Madame Gaspard's basket.

"Ah! my dear," she said confidentially to Marie, "you do not understand business so well as I do, you should learn to bargain like me. That butter was worth twenty-eight sous at the very least (this was whispered in Marie's ear), and you see I have it for twenty-four; that is well worth the trouble. You will have to learn all these things, soon. When is the marriage to be, by the way?"

"Not for a long time, Madame Gaspard."

"Ah! so you say, my dear, but Monsieur Josef sings a different song, and he'll have his way, I'm sure."

Marie said nothing, unless a slight compres-

sion of her lips and elevation of her head could be said to be an answer.

“Yes, yes, my dear; you toss your head, but we all know you are engaged, you know, and he and your mother will fix the day for you. How is your mother? Pray give her my best compliments, and tell her I am going to make some of my far-famed pomegranate kernel preserve, and I hope she will accept of a jar; poor dear creature, she has not much time for making preserve, I suppose, nor you either. Ah! there is Monsieur Josef; I will just speak to him, and then I must leave you, as I have some business at the end of the street. Where are you going, if I may ask?”

“To the chapel.”

Madame Gaspard did not wait for the answer, for Monsieur Josef was passing by, with an abstracted look on his face, and did not see her.

“Monsieur Josef,” and Madame Gaspard caught his coat sleeve. “You have forgotten me, apparently.”

“I beg your pardon, Madame Gaspard, I did not see you, nor Mademoiselle Marie either. I hope Monsieur le Maire is well; will you excuse me if I hurry away? I have been

sent for to the inn, where a stranger has been taken ill, and I ought to go at once."

"A stranger! who can he be? What is his name? Where does he come from? What is the——. Ah! *ciel*, he is gone! Well, well, he could not help himself; but what makes him call you mademoiselle in that cold tone, Marie? you are not a bit like affianced lovers. Now, when *I* was young . . . There is Monsieur le Cure, and I have to speak to him. *Au revoir*, my dear child, do not forget my message to your mother," and Madame Gaspard ran away as lightly as a girl of sixteen summers.

Marie went on to the chapel.

"Ay, why is he so cold," she thought. "Perhaps he is tired of me already, and I—I know not what I feel for him."

Ay, Marie, he is weary, not of you, but of your coldness; if he could he would beg you rather to break the bonds that hold you, than show him—as you so plainly do—how hateful they are to you. But he is too generous; he fears that you will misunderstand his motives, and so he is miserable, and his sorrow shows itself in an unconscious coldness of manner which has often (even with all your pride) wounded you to the quick.

Marie reached the chapel and went in. How great was the contrast between its shadowy, cool repose, and the busy scene without. Outside—the world with all its petty cares and joys and griefs, its toils and labours. Inside—thoughts of Heaven; rainbow tints from the east window staining the oaken floor, as the sun fell through the coloured garments of the Virgin and child, and lay in dazzling rays of beauty on the ground. And Marie knelt in the softened light, which seemed to clothe her with a haze of glory—a picture of loveliness which an artist would have longed to render immortal. The soft grey dress, touched here and there with red and blue and gold, as the light coloured it; the beautiful face, with its perfect features, its deep blue eyes, “like wells of light,” and the rippling mass of golden hair encircling it, one tress falling on her shoulder like a flake of light. Such an impassioned face it was, and alas! the prayer she came to pray—the wish of her whole life—was not “Thy will be done!” but “Give me vengeance! if I wait for years.”

Never (since Louis Daryl had left her for ever) had she passed one day without praying the same prayer, and the awfulness of the feeling that prompted the words—the contrast

between those feelings of vengeance and earthly hatred, and the holy place she knelt in, had never struck her; she had never seen the wickedness of her wish. No! Marie needed some strong, sudden feeling, some lightning flash of emotion—of some *pure*, holy emotion, to shew her these things in their true light.

She rose presently and went home to her daily work. She had expected to meet Monsieur Josef by the way, but he was nowhere to be seen; and she spent her spare time that day in wondering what had become of him. She was so used to have him at her beck and call that she missed him when she was parted from him for a day. All the evening he was absent, and it was not until the next evening that she saw him at all, and then only for a short time. His patient at the inn was very ill, he said, and could not possibly recover, and he felt that it was his duty to spend as much time as he could with him, for the poor man had no friend in Marvillais—in fact, seemed to have no friends in the world at all, and evidently had some great trouble on his mind, and he would not see the Curé; he was an Englishman, and a Protestant, and had a prejudice against priests. “The least Monsieur Josef could do then was

to stay with him while he had time." Marie fancied (though Monsieur Josef said, with forced gallantry, "That he was miserable at being forced to spend an evening away from her,")—that there was a look of relief on his face as he left her, and from sheer contradiction the wilful girl cried herself to sleep that night; she could not have told why.

We are continually being told—and we see such strange things happen in the world around, that we know it to be the case—"That truth is stranger than fiction," and yet we seldom realize it.

If anyone had told Monsieur Josef that the opportunity of bringing Louis Daryl into disgrace would ever be in his hands, he would have disbelieved it, and yet it came to pass.

The stranger at the inn (who gave his name as John Temple) had known Louis Daryl intimately, and had evidently aided and abetted him in many schemes which were anything but reputable; but, unlike Louis Daryl, he had been a careless man, with a contemptuous disregard for appearances, which Louis had, on the contrary, thought much of, and the consequence was, that while the world looked upon Louis as a prudent, praiseworthy young man,

John Temple had been universally condemned. This repudiation by the world and his own friends had done him no good; it had made him reckless, and he had gone on growing worse and worse, until after the failure of a little scheme, for embezzling certain sums of money which were to pass through his hands (he was a clerk in a bank) — a scheme in which Louis Daryl was a partner, when John Temple was forced to fly from London and conceal himself abroad. He had applied to Louis Daryl for assistance, but the latter had written him a contemptuous letter, telling him he was a fool for not taking better precautions against discovery, and—very incautiously—advising him “to take example by him (Louis Daryl), who had always managed so well that he was able now to set up in life as a rich man, well thought of by the world,” and concluding by telling him that he no longer wished to keep up an acquaintance with a man who was so utterly regardless of appearances as John Temple.

Stung to the quick by this insolent letter, John Temple resolved upon revenge. Cost what it might, he would go back to England, and expose Louis Daryl (who, little as he knew


it, was in this man's power), even though he were to suffer for it himself all his life. But this resolution was never carried out. He had been living at a small place, some twenty miles from Marvillais; he set off on foot, with his little luggage in his hand—for he had not much money left, and he was forced to walk—but he never reached the port for which he was bound. He had arrived at Marvillais after a long, weary walk, and had been unable to proceed—fever had overtaken him; and when Monsieur Josef was called in to see him at the old inn, John Temple was sinking fast—excitement and the burning heat of the sun during his long walk had done their work upon a frame already enfeebled, and there seemed little hope of his recovery. He spoke French well, and expressed his gratitude to Monsieur Josef for his kindness (when the latter entered his bedroom with the intention of passing the night there), telling him at the same time that he could not repay him.

“There will be just enough left for my funeral,” he said, in a weak voice; “I am sinking fast, *Monsieur le docteur*, and shall soon be out of your way.”

Monsieur Josef sat down by the bedside and took his hand.

“Is there nothing I can do for you?” he asked. “Can I write to your relations or your friends for you!”

John Temple smiled bitterly. “My relations disowned me long ago,” he said, “and for my *friends*—I have none.” He paused for breath, and then added—“I am a gentleman, or rather, I was one once, but Louis Daryl was my associate at college, and he led me astray. I gambled away a large fortune, Daryl gaining most of it, and gradually I sank deeper and deeper into the mire, until it was too late for repentance, and I became reckless; then Daryl and I engaged in a plan for robbing the bank where I was clerk; it was discovered, however, and of course no one dreamed that the *soi disant* respectable Daryl (who was pretty well off, too) was engaged in it, and I would not betray him, so I alone was suspected; but I escaped, and arrived in France. I applied to him for a small sum of money (in old times I had so often supplied *him*), telling him at the same time that I was sick of this life of cheating and deception, and meant to try and find



some honest employment. His reply was so insolent and contemptuous that it fired me at once, and I determined that I would return to England and give myself up to the hands of justice, and I would take the proofs I had of his share in our guilty plot and denounce him. I set out and arrived here; you know the rest, Docteur Olivier; this is but the fitting termination to a life of wickedness and weakness. Yes, I have been a weak man all my life; had I been firm I might be happy now, and living at home, rich and respected, for I never did anything wrong at my own instigation. I followed where others led, and received the blows while they were rewarded. Well, it was better so. I can see the mercy that has punished me *now*, that I might not go on further in sin. I renounce all idea of revenge. I give up all my anger against Daryl. I forgive him freely; may God forgive me as I forgive my enemy. Do you think he will, Docteur Olivier? I have been so wicked all my life."

He did not wait for answer, but rambled on, his voice growing fainter.

"I might have been better if she had cared *for me*," he said, "but I dared not tell her

how I worshipped her. I was not worthy of her love; and yet, if she had loved me I would have tried to reform. But no one has ever cared for me; I fancied she did once. Well, it is best as it is; at least she will not suffer when she knows I am dead."

He was silent for a while, watching the night lamp flickering in uncertain light against the wall; suddenly he raised himself on his pillow and laid his thin hand on Monsieur Josef's shoulder.

"Promise that this shall be buried with me," he said earnestly.

It was a locket he wore attached to a black chain round his neck. He touched a spring and it opened, and inside was the portrait of a girl's face—such a sweet loving face, with dark hair clustering in thick curls on the broad, low brow. He looked at it long and sadly.

"For the last time," he said at length with a sigh, and he closed the locket and fell back on his pillow.

"I cannot breathe; it is dark, so dark," he muttered. "What was that you said, Lucy? You love me? No! no! I will not believe it; your love is not for me. I should but blight your young life. I am better alone—alone."

He raised himself again with an effort. Monsieur Josef put his arm round him.

"Think of Christ," he whispered, "He will love you. Do not think of earthly love now."

The dying man turned to him with an eager look.

"Will He pity me, have mercy on me now? At the eleventh hour?"

"My friend," said Monsieur Josef, "the thief on the cross repented and was saved."

"Then there is hope for me." His wan features lightened.

"I am dying," he said. "Bury me here, at Marvillais. There is money—to pay—for you all that is left. Burn my papers; to your care I leave them. God bless you and reward you for a good Samaritan."

He clasped the locket convulsively, and murmured:

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we——."

His voice failed and died away. He fell back with a sigh, his heavy eyelids closed, and the weary heart was at rest for ever.

Gently Monsieur Josef crossed the thin hands over the silent heart.

"Heaven rest his soul," he said earnestly. "Ah! he has suffered in his short life," and he

gazed pityingly at the thin features, so young and so worn, the lines of care and sorrow on the brow.

“And Heaven forgive Louis Daryl. If this man, whom he has so much offended, has forgiven him, surely I may.”

And Monsieur Josef knelt by the bedside and prayed for the only man he had ever disliked as fervently as for his best friend.

CHAPTER XII.

A few days later Marie Delorme was sitting in the garden in the twilight, reading; she was alone. Presently she closed the book with a sigh, and rising from the bench where she had been sitting, she slowly paced the gravel walk in deep thought. It was three days since she had seen Monsieur Josef, and she wondered what had kept him away. She was thinking of him, when the garden door, which led into Madame Olivier's grounds, was opened slowly, and Monsieur Josef himself appeared. He greeted his *fiancée* absently, and seemed to

have something on his mind which he *wished*, but did not *like* to say.

“You have been a long time away, Monsieur,” said Marie haughtily. “I supposed you did not intend appearing again.”

“I have had much to sadden me,” was the answer. “That poor stranger died the other day, and I have been arranging for his funeral, and doing what I could in the matter until to-day. Marie, the ways of Providence are inscrutable; that man was led into wrong, that man was ruined, and the man who did both was Louis Daryl.”

Marie turned deathly white—“Louis Daryl!”

“Yes; but Mr. Temple, before he died, forgave his enemy. He renounced the idea of vengeance which he had conceived.”

“Of vengeance! how could he be revenged?”

“He had with him the written proofs of Monsieur Daryl’s complicity in a scheme to defraud Monsieur Temple’s employers.”

“Proofs! where are they now?” Marie’s eyes were glowing with light, her whole countenance transformed.

“He left his papers to me.”

“And you have those proofs! Ah: Heaven

has at length granted my daily prayer. I knew my revenge would come some day."

Monsieur Josef gazed at her in astonishment. "Marie, are you mad?"

"No, Monsieur Josef, I am not mad. Bring me those papers; I will have my revenge at last; I will denounce the traitor who deceived me—the false-hearted man whom I hate!"

"I shall burn those proofs, Mademoiselle Marie," said Monsieur Josef quietly. "What right have you or have I to go against the wishes of that dead man? We are bidden to forgive our enemies, not to be revenged on them."

"And I tell you that I *will* be revenged," said Marie, in a low clear voice. "Do you hear, Monsieur Josef Olivier, give me those papers and let me have my just revenge, or I will not be your wife—I will never speak to you again."

"I cannot give you the papers, honour, justice, and charity alike forbid it."

Marie drew herself up, indignation in every feature. "I never dreamed that you, too, would turn traitor, Monsieur Olivier; I thought you good and true, I believed in you, I had learnt to trust you; ay, and I was learning to love

you. Yes; you start, you do not believe me, and yet it is true. Give me my just due; give me those papers, and I will be your devoted wife; but"—and her voice grew hard—"refuse me, and we can never meet again, for stronger than love—stronger than *life* itself—is my wish for revenge."

Monsieur Josef threw himself at his idol's feet. "Marie! Marie! I did not dream that you could love me!" She thought he was relenting, and she smiled triumphantly, but he went on—"You would not have me buy your love at the expense of my honour? Think what you are doing, Marie. You tell me I am true, and in the same breath ask me to renounce my truth and my honour. You cannot mean it—you *cannot* mean it! you—my angel of goodness—the only woman whom I believe to be perfect. You cannot seriously nourish such a passion for revenge; think of that poor fellow, Marie, on his dying bed, to which he had been brought by Louis Daryl; he forgave his enemy. *Your* wrongs are not so great, Marie, cannot *you* forgive? Leave vengeance alone; it is a dangerous tool to meddle with."

"And you are afraid of cutting your fingers *with it*, Monsieur," Maria said scornfully,

“and you *dare* not assist me! So be it, then, since you wish it. We part now, never to meet again. I did not know Monsieur Olivier ranked cowardice amongst his virtues.”

The young man rose from the ground, and stood before her, his eyes on her face. “*Mais*—*mademoiselle Marie* knows,” he said, “that I would lay down my life to serve her; but not even for her love—and God alone knows how I value it—will I do wrong. *Marie!* you must relent; you say you love me. Ah! what love is it that cannot give up revenge for the sake of the loved one? *Marie*, you *must* hear me. Stay; do not leave me like this!” He caught her hand—she snatched it away.

“No,” she said—her blue eyes flashing with anger—“I will hear no more; you never loved me; you are a traitor, like the rest of mankind. Go! and let me never see your face again. You won my love—*mine*—when I never thought to love again; but, though I should trample on my own heart in the act, I would still say—Go!”

She walked swiftly down the little garden path without one backward look, and disappeared through the open window into the house. Monsieur Josef made a movement as

if to follow her, then paused, "Ah, it is too much," he said, in a hoarse voice. "The love I have longed for all my life to be within my very grasp, and then—to lose it! It is not too late now even, if I gave up those papers—but I cannot be so dishonourable—that poor Monsieur Temple trusted in me. No; I can do nothing."

Slowly he left the garden, and returned to his house. His mother was in her room, awaiting his return.

"Well, my son," she said, enquiringly.

"Well, *ma mère*; my life is over. From to-night I live solely for duty and for you."

He knelt by her side, and hid his face in his hands. His mother laid her hand on his curly hair, and smoothed it as if he were a child.

"You have done your duty, Josef," she said.

"Yes."

It was a heart-broken yes, as if with the effort all hope, all courage had left him.

In silence they sat together in the gathering twilight, for the sun had set and it was growing late. Suddenly Monsieur Josef rose.

"I will burn those papers at once," he said :
"it is best to be out of the reach of temptation."

He lighted the little bronze lamp, unlocked a drawer, and taking out some letters he burnt them carefully one by one. His face white and wan and his lips rigidly compressed, he watched the last spark glimmering in the little heap of grey ashes on the old oak table. A puff of wind from the open window scattered them over the room.

“Ay,” he murmured, “so does the last spark of hope fade in my heart—so do my hopes lie scattered to the winds.” He turned to his mother. “I have to go out this evening,” he said. “Old Margot is still living, and I promised to go up and see if I could do her any good ; she suffers so much, poor thing.”

“It is so far, Josef ; and it is growing dark.”

“But she is suffering, and I may be able to alleviate the pain and do her good, at least to free her last hours from pain.”

He took his hat, bent over his mother, and gave her the kiss, without which he never left her, and went out into the night.

For some hours Madame Olivier sat alone ; but from time to time she raised her head and listened, then went on with her work again with a disappointed look. Some hours had passed, and she began to grow anxious.

"I wonder what detains him," she was saying to herself, "he is very late," when she heard his step.

He came in tired and dejected.

"She is dead," he said, in a sad tone; "I was too late to do any good; but I stayed a little to comfort the old man. He cannot last much longer himself, but he is quite heart-broken. I found him sitting by his wife, and the first words he said to me were, 'I knew there would be no orange blossoms to put in her coffin, and she loved them so much.' 'There is the fruit,' I said, 'which in its ripeness and beauty resembles her soul, which was too spiritual for earth, and fled to heaven, as the ripened orange drops from the bough when it is fit for use.' 'Aye, she was too good for earth, too good for me.' He uncovered her face, over which he had thrown a white handkerchief. There was a smile on the lips—a peaceful, happy smile. Jean looked at her in silence for a time, then he lost his self-control, and threw himself on his knees by her side. 'My wife, my own wife, come back! I am alone, I am alone! After forty years to leave me in the roughest part of the road! Oh, Margot, Margot, why didst thou go first!'"

Monsieur Josef paused. "I cannot go on," he said, with tears in his eyes, "it breaks my heart. Ah! what sorrow there is in the world, what tears, what mourning!"

He sat down by his mother, and laid his hand on hers. She started.

"My son, you are ill," she said, anxiously; "your hand is burning."

"It is nothing—a touch of fever; it will pass. I will go to bed."

He rose, but he could hardly stand.

"It is my turn to lead you," said Madame Olivier, trying to speak cheerfully. "Lean on me, Josef; you know I can walk to your room alone."

She led him to his room, then rang the bell she always carried with her.

"Go for Monsieur Bouchier," she said to the servant who answered the bell; "tell him that Monsieur Olivier is ill."

And then she sat by her son's bedside. He seemed to be dozing, he was so still. Presently the maid came back with the doctor, who was a friend of Monsieur Josef's. He shook his head and looked solemn.

"Over excitement," he said; "he must be kept very quiet. This is a bad time of the year

for fever; I hope it may not be brain fever, but it looks like the beginning of it."

Through the long night the poor mother sat and watched—with her *heart*, for her eyes could not see—and the doctor stayed with her. When the grey morning dawned, Monsieur Josef was delirious, and Monsieur Bouchier said some one must help Madame Olivier to nurse him, for the servant was of very little use. He would send some one.

Accordingly he left the house with the intention of seeking Madame Gaspard, who was fond of nursing, and would always help in an emergency. On his way he met Marie Delorme.

"You have heard, I suppose," he said to her.

"Heard what?"

"Of Monsieur Josef's illness. He has brain fever, is dangerously ill and knows no one, and Madame his mother is alone to nurse him. I am going to ask Madame Gaspard if she will help her."

"I will go."

Marie's voice was very faint, and her face grew white as she spoke.

"You, Mademoiselle Delorme, you are not strong enough."

"I will go," was all she answered in the

same measured tone of voice, and Monsieur Bouchier saw there was something beneath, and forebore to say more.

A few brief directions he gave her, and then, promising to call and see his patient in the evening, he left her, and Marie went straight to Madame Olivier's house.

Her rash words, spoken in a moment of passion, and repented of almost as soon as said—"I will never speak to you again"—came back to her as she entered Monsieur Josef's room, and saw him lying there unconscious of her presence, and his mother,—her head bowed on her hands,—sitting by his side.

What if Marie's words had been prophetic, and she should never speak to him more? Despair seized upon her. Ah! in seeking revenge on others had she not brought a judgment on herself? She threw herself on her knees by Madame Olivier.

"I am not worthy of forgiveness," she said, "I am not worthy to come near you; but you are so good. Madame Olivier, forgive me; let me stay and nurse him, and then, when he is well, I will never cross his path again. Forgive me! forgive me!"

Her eyes, full of tearless agony, were raised to Madame Olivier's face. The old lady bent over her and took her hands.

"He is my only son," she said, in a low despairing tone, "and he is dying, and you have done it. But I forgive you, Marie Delorme, even as I hope to be forgiven."

"No, no; he cannot die, he shall not die. If love for me has been his bane through life, my love for him shall be his salvation. He will be saved, Madame Olivier, he will not die. Do you think such a loss, such an awful trial, could come to one so saintlike as you are? Oh, no! our God is good. If you can forgive me, cannot He who is perfect forgive me too, and spare us both the one being whom we love so dearly."

She had risen from her knees and stood beside Madame Olivier.

"You are worn out for want of rest," she added; "go and lie down, stay, I will bring your bed in here and make it ready for you." She left the room, returning with the servant and a mattress, which she made up into a bed on the floor for Madame Olivier, who, really tired as she was, would not consent to lie down until Marie had promised that she would wake her if her son was worse. She yielded, then,

and lay down, and presently Marie heard from her breathing that she slept. And Marie sat beside Monsieur Josef's sick bed, and for once in her life she thought not at all of herself, but only of him and what he had suffered. Yes, the man whom—even while she loved him—she had looked down upon, was immeasurably above her; he had given up the one great hope of his existence rather than do wrong. She remembered the curé's words, and how little she had believed him, but she was forced to acknowledge it now. Josef *was* true and good and faithful, and *she*, what had she been? "And perhaps he may never hear me say 'forgive,'" she thought; "he will die, believing me to be unrepentant and hardened. Ah! how changed he is in these few hours!"

Yes, he was changed, indeed; but it was not only the work of a few hours, but the sorrow and anxiety of weeks and months that was showing itself now in the weary face. He stirred uneasily and opened his eyes—so bright they were—but they rested on Marie's face without a gleam of recognition.

"My life is over, mother," he said. "Marie has left me, she never loved me." Then louder, and in a tone of agony—"My darling, my only

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love, may God forgive you and soften your heart."

All through the day he went on in a piteous tone, always on that subject, and Margot's death. Sometimes for a moment, when Marie's cool hand rested on his forehead, he would be calm, but he never knew her, and she felt heart-broken. All her pride, her haughtiness, her revenge, were as shadows of the past, and the Marie who knelt to implore that Josef's life might be spared, and that her sin should not be visited on the *widowed* mother, was a penitent, loving woman.

CHAPTER XIII.

"WELL, my dear," said Mrs. Wylde one evening to Gabrielle, in the particularly cheerful tone she always used when she had something unpleasant to say, "I heard a piece of news this afternoon at Mrs. Burton's."

Gabrielle looked up from her drawing with a weary look which it was sad to see on so young a face.

“Did you, mamma, what was it?”

“Miles Lillingston is going to be married. Mrs. Burton heard it from a friend who had it on good authority. I did not hear the young lady’s name.”

“I hope he will be happy,” said Gabrielle softly, but her heart was beating rebelliously.

“Well, I’m sure I don’t; it’s all very well to be forgiving and all that kind of thing, but I think he might have waited a little longer. Well, well; men are all alike. What are you going to wear this evening, Gabrielle?”

“I don’t know, mamma. Elise said you had settled about my dress.”

“Oh, ah! I forgot. All white with white flowers. Of course you must wear that new dress of yours. This is the first large ball you have been to, and it would not do to wear colours. You had better go and dress at once.” And Gabrielle went, glad to escape.

“Could it be true?” she asked herself as Elise was dressing her hair, and she sat immoveable like a statue, with not an atom of colour in her face. “Had he forgotten her so soon—and why not? she was so insignificant beside him, of course he had forgotten her.”

“Will Mademoiselle like the flowers placed low or high?” broke in the French maid.

“I don’t care, Elise.”

“Ah! high on the top of the head suits Mademoiselle best. There, that looks perfection.”

“Thank you, it does very well, Elise.”

“Ah, Mademoiselle is not enthusiastic. If ‘Ce cher Monsieur Miles’ was to be at the ball *he* would be enthusiastic. He knows what is beautiful when he sees it. Mademoiselle wears her new dress this evening; it is perfectly charming.”

“Mademoiselle seems almost culpably indifferent to its beauties,” thought Elise, when her young mistress was dressed in the delicate fabric of gauze.

“Ah, Mademoiselle is like an angel,” cried the maid, “that dressmaker is a true artiste; it is too beautiful. Now, if Mademoiselle would not look so pale, but perhaps she is suffering with a headache?”

“It is not much, Elise. I think I had better go down now.”

“Ah! pauvre chère demoiselle!” said Elise with a shake of her head, as she watched her young mistress down the broad oak staircase,

what an ogre that Monsieur Wylde is to have separated her from Monsieur Miles."

All society was alike distasteful and wearying to Gabrielle now, and it was with no anticipations of pleasure that she followed her mother into Mrs. Trevan's crowded rooms. She knew well that the only face she cared to see would be absent, the only voice whose echoes lived in her heart would not greet her ear. The first half-hour of the evening was spent in actual bodily torture, for she was tightly wedged in the corner of the room, with her mother on one side and a very stout old dowager on the other; from this position she was released by a claimant for her hand in the next waltz. It was at first hardly a release, for she did not feel inclined to talk, but her partner, a very animated young Irishman, amused her in spite of herself, and as they rested he told her so many anecdotes that she was forced to laugh. College adventures,—accidents on the river,—boat races in which he had been the victor—all these he told with evident enjoyment and just enough of the Irish brogue to be pleasant. She felt quite sorry when the dance was over. However, she went with him to have an ice, and as the refreshment room was crowded he found her a

seat on the stair, brought her an ice, and then stood leaning against the banisters.

"It is quite a cold night," he said, "the moonlight is beautiful, and the air so clear that it must be frosty. What a splendid effect the light has coming in at that window."

They were seated at the foot of the stairs, looking straight before them, they could see out into the night through the large hall window; to the left was the refreshment room, and the sound of voices and laughter, and the glare of the wax lights were a vivid contrast to the stillness without. Gabrielle did not answer, the moonlight had brought back so clearly to her memory the evening when Miles had told her of her father's consent to their engagement. The young Irishman's next speech chimed in so strangely with her thoughts that she started violently.

"It was just such an evening as this when Lillingston and I had our accident on the river: how pluckily he behaved, to be sure!"—he stopped suddenly, for Gabrielle's face had grown strangely white. "You are faint, ill, Miss Wylde, let me get you a glass of wine, or something."

"No, no, I am quite well, thank you, go on

with your story," and Gabrielle made an effort and recovered herself.

"Well, it was rather late and growing dark, and we were rowing fast to get home in good time (we had been practising for a race which was to take place the following week), when all at once, bump went the boat up against an old stump, and the next thing we knew we were both in the water and the boat nowhere. Well, in those days I could not swim, but, luckily for me, Lillingston could. I went straight to the bottom, and I should have been drowned to a certainty (leaving a mother and eight sisters to mourn their irreparable loss) if that fellow had not dived after me; three times he tried before he caught hold of me, and then I was so far gone, and he was so much exhausted, that he had great difficulty in getting me to land, and when he did, the boat was gone, and he was afraid of leaving me, unconscious as I was, while he looked for it; so he put me on his shoulders and ran the whole way home to his rooms, more than half-a-mile it was, and a half drowned man is no small weight, I can tell you. I heard afterwards that he dropped down from sheer exhaustion when he got in, and no wonder; wasn't it plucky? He was such a

good fellow too, and we all liked him. I have lost sight of him lately, but I must try and look him up. I shall never forget his saving my life. I wish I could do something for him."

"You can, you can!" said Gabrielle, her face glowing with excitement, forgetting quite as she spoke that the young man was a stranger to her.

"You can do more than save his life; his reputation—his honour—is in question. Someone has dared to slander him to my father. You know what he really is; you can clear him."

She had risen, her hands clasped tightly, her eyes raised imploringly.

"You know him, then? How strange!"

"Know him? Yes, he is my cousin."

"And who has dared to speak ill of him?"

"I do not know. I never heard; but you can find out. You know it is false."

"False! I should think so. He never could have turned out badly."

"It was at college that they said he was so wicked—that he gambled—I know not what," and Gabrielle almost forgot her English in her excitement.

“Gambled! At college! Why there never as a steadier fellow, only he was persuaded by someone to play off a practical joke on the Dean. Lots of us were in it, but he was the only one caught, and there had been so much of the same kind of thing just then, that, in spite of Lillingston’s good character, he was rusticated for a year; but he was too proud to come back afterwards. He had refused to betray the others, and I think the authorities were so vexed at his refusal, that they were more severe than they would otherwise have been. Gambled! why he never touched a card—did not care for playing in the least. If any one should know it ought to be myself, who was always with him. Will you introduce me to your father, Miss Wylde? I should like to clear this up at once.”

He held out his arm. Gabrielle could hardly help smiling at his impetuosity, although she was almost as impetuous herself; but she knew her father’s love of formality.

“It would be better to ask Mrs. Trevan to introduce you,” she said. “I do not even know your name, and my father will require some strong proof of Mr. Lillingston’s innocence, I am afraid.”

“I can give him proofs enough. There’s not a soul at college who would not be proud and happy to speak for Miles Lillingston, and its myself that would be the proudest. But it might be better to ask Mrs. Trevan to introduce me, she’s an old friend of my mother’s, and knows me well.”

So saying, the young man took Gabrielle back to the ball room, where, after leading her back to her mother, he managed to get near Mr. Wylde, and, with true Hibernian ingenuity, succeeded in not only obtaining an introduction to him, but in fascinating him completely ; then, in the midst of an anecdote, he introduced Miles’ name, brought it in as often as he could, and finally managed to make Mr. Wylde—proud and reserved as he generally was—question him as to Miles’ reputation.

Now was his time. With an eloquence and rapidity that nothing could stop, Patrick Brian held forth on Miles’ good qualities for at least an hour, and his speech had the wonderful effect of persuading Mr. Wylde to promise that he would write to the college authorities for particulars of Miles’ conduct at college.

“That is the most I can do,” Mr. Wylde said, when Patrick urged that Miles was inno-

cent, "and if I have a favourable answer I may restore Mr. Lillingston to his former place in my esteem. In any case, Mr. Brian, I thank you for your information ; your zeal on behalf of your friend does you credit, and I honour you for it. I think your late father was a friend of mine in my young days. There is very good shooting, I believe, about my little place, and if you should ever be near us, I shall be happy to see you."

"A pompous old idiot!" said Patrick Brian to himself; "why couldn't he believe me, instead of writing to those old fogies?"

However, it was evident that Mr. Wylde preferred the testimony of the "old fogies" to that of Patrick Brian, and although that young gentleman thought himself much aggrieved thereby, it was perhaps as well that Mr. Wylde should be assured by those whose testimony he could not doubt of Miles' innocence of the charges brought against him.

Not one word did Mr. Wylde vouchsafe either to his wife or daughter on the subject, but he did write to the college on the morning following the ball ; he wrote, and received an answer in reply which completely satisfied him, and then he wrote to Miles, apologising for having

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Alone in her room, Gabrielle opened the little note, the first she had received from Miles; it was brief.

"I am quite aware, Miss Wylde, that you do not need these lines to assure you that no claim of mine will interfere with you henceforth. I can say, with truth, that I hope you will be happy, and that the companion for life whom you have chosen will prove himself worthy of you. Do not blame me for saying that I did *not* think you could forget so soon: I cannot, and therefore I am going abroad. When you have received this I shall have left England for ever. You will wonder how I heard of your engagement; when I tell you that a friend of mine was at Mrs. Trevan's party, you will wonder no longer. God bless you, and good-bye for ever."

That was all. In utter astonishment Gabrielle gazed at the words as if she did not see them. She could not understand. Had her innocent conversation with Patrick Brian done that? What *had* she done? Nothing. He was very cruel. The room seemed to swim round with her; it was too much to bear, and she fainted.

believed the reports against him, and telling him that he would be happy to receive him should he wish to come.

"Dear Sir," ran Miles' answer, "I feel that it would be best for both of us that I should not come to you. You have once distrusted me, you will perhaps distrust me again. I will take this opportunity, therefore, of thanking you all for your kindness, and bidding you good-bye.

"Yours sincerely,

"MILES LILLINGSTON.

May I ask you to give the enclosed note to Miss Wylde?"

"Mr. Wylde read the letter through without a comment, and then, sending for Gabrielle, he gave her the enclosure unopened.

"I was mistaken with regard to that young man's character, Gabrielle," he said, slowly, "and my mistake has had some unpleasant consequences; I regret it, as much for your sake as for his, but it is too late now, and if he is proud, so am I. We will not speak of him again."

No one knew what it cost him to make such a speech to his own daughter, but he said it as *a duty*, and then dismissed her.

Alone in her room, Gabrielle opened the little note, the first she had received from Miles; it was brief.

“I am quite aware, Miss Wylde, that you do not need these lines to assure you that no claim of mine will interfere with you henceforth. I can say, with truth, that I hope you will be happy, and that the companion for life whom you have chosen will prove himself worthy of you. Do not blame me for saying that I did *not* think you could forget so soon: I cannot, and therefore I am going abroad. When you have received this I shall have left England for ever. You will wonder how I heard of your engagement; when I tell you that a friend of mine was at Mrs. Trevan’s party, you will wonder no longer. God bless you, and good-bye for ever.”

That was all. In utter astonishment Gabrielle gazed at the words as if she did not see them. She could not understand. Had her innocent conversation with Patrick Brian done that? What had she done? Nothing. He was very cruel. The room seemed to swim round with her; it was too much to bear, and she fainted.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR days Monsieur Josef hovered between life and death, and the two sorrowing women who watched by him dare not hope. Marie would have sacrificed her own life by her unwearied attendance upon him had it not been for Madame Gaspard; that active little woman would come like a flash of light, or a summer breeze, into the sick-room where poor Monsieur Josef lay moaning.

"No better?" she would say, cheerily, as if it was something pleasant. "Of course he is not better with such long faces round his bed; go out of doors and take the air, Marie. What good will it do him to sit moping there? Always put on a cheerful face, my child, in a sick-room, even if the patient *is* unconscious," and she would, good humouredly, push Marie out of the room and see her safely out of the house. "I will stay here and talk to Madame Olivier," she would say, and Marie was sent out with a solemn injunction from her beneficent tyrant not to return within an hour.

Then it was that she saw how Monsieur Josef was beloved. It would be—"How is

our dear doctor to-day?" from one. "Mademoiselle knows how he saved our baby's life last year. Ten nights did he sit up with her, aye, and fed her with his own hand every half hour. God bless him! Would mademoiselle be kind enough to give him these pomegranates, if he will accept them; it is all we have to give."

And another would say—"Tell us he is better, mademoiselle, or we shall despair. Who will help us all when he is gone? Who will give us food and medicine, and comfort and kind words, as he did? Ah! doctors are not always so kind to the poor; anything will do for them, they say, but *ce cher* Monsieur Olivier, he was always kind and considerate; he made himself poor to give to us. Surely the good God will not take him to Heaven yet, there are so many there like him, but we have none besides; they would not miss him up there, the angels, but we should never replace him."

One poor family whom he had befriended had worked an extra hour every night that they might bestow their earnings in prayers from the church for his recovery. Fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs, honey, home-made wine—every-

one, even the very poorest, had some offering of the kind to bring to the man whom they looked upon as their guardian angel. One little child—a black-eyed, brown-faced mite of about five summers—brought a bunch of flowers, and gave them to Marie. “For the good gentleman, mademoiselle,” she said, with the tears in her great wistful eyes. “I have nothing to give him but these and my prayers, and my mother has given me leave to go on a pilgrimage, and then, perhaps, our Lady, to whose chapel I am going, will hear my prayers for him. Is he very sick, mademoiselle, and does he take his medicine well, as he taught me to do? Ah! he was good to me!”

It was the same thing all over the town— young and old, rich and poor, all loved Monsieur Josef, all besieged Marie with questions, and she could only answer by a shake of the head or one or two words—more she could not trust herself to say, for she could hardly speak without tears. She would go back to her post if possible saddened yet more by these trying interviews. And Madame Gaspard would try to cheer her up, and spend an hour in repeating anecdotes and instances of wonderful recoveries

from all kinds of fevers, and Marie would try to believe them, but she had lost all hope.

“My daughter, your punishment is a hard one,” said the curé, one evening, as he sat with her by Monsieur Josef’s bedside, and Madame Olivier dozed in her chair. “It seems a cruel one to you now, no doubt, but remember that you were wilful, for you were warned. I will believe, nevertheless, that you deceived yourself unconsciously; but, Marie, your trial is sent in mercy. I feel it as I see the crust of worldliness and pride dissolving, and the little Marie of long ago coming back to life.”

“Ah! Monsieur le Curé, you do not know half my wickedness; Josef never told you of our last interview. Alas! if it should be our last.”

“I knew beforehand, my child, what he was about to do, and his mother told me. Yes, you were much to blame; and what wonder that you acted thus, when you had been slowly hardening your heart for years? Nothing but a storm like this could have softened it. And now I must leave you, my child—there are other sick-beds that need my presence. God bless you!” and he laid his hand on the girl’s

bowed head with fatherly tenderness ; “ I shall come again in the morning. Monsieur Bourchier seems to think to-night will be the turning point ; pray for resignation, my daughter, whatever the end may be.”

He left the room, and Marie still sat by the bedside, with her head bowed on her hands.

“ The end ! ah, what might the end not be ? ” she thought, sadly ; and then her thoughts went back to her last interview with Josef—to his noble conduct and her cruelty. A half-suppressed cry broke from her : “ Josef, Josef, if you die, I cannot live ! ”

Monsieur Josef stirred in his sleep, and she crushed her hands together to repress the agonised sobs which would come. She leant over the bed ; he still slept, although uneasily. What would the waking be ? Ah, it was madness to think, for it might be consciousness and health—it might be death. The doctor had told her that this was the crisis, and he had bidden her, if Monsieur Josef awoke conscious, not to allow him to see her, as it might agitate him. Even as she watched him he unclosed his eyes ; Marie shrank back, and hastily woke Madame Olivier, who was still asleep.

“What has happened?—where am I?” said Monsieur Olivier, feebly.

His mother bent over him :

“You are not well, my son—you must not speak. Drink this.”

She gave him the medicine the doctor had left, and sat down by his side, with his hand in hers.

“Mother,” he said, feebly, and Madame Olivier wept silent tears of joy. He knew her! he was better, he would recover! And the poor mother could hardly restrain her joy within prudent limits. Marie looked on from the other end of the room; she saw Monsieur Josef raise his mother’s hand to his lips; she heard him say, with a sigh of recollection—“Mother, I remember! Well, it is over; we will love each other the more.” And she stole quietly out of the room; she had no right to look on—she had forfeited his love. And as she closed the door she heard him say, in utter unconsciousness of her presence, “I am cured of my folly, mother; henceforward I will learn to forget.”

And the words fell upon her heart like lead. Yes, she deserved that his love should cool—she deserved to be forgotten; it was only a just

retribution. The little servant met her going down the stairs.

“Mademoiselle desires anything?” she asked.

“No, thank you, Nanon, nothing. Monsieur Olivier is better; I am going home.”

“Going; Surely not before I have made mademoiselle a cup of coffee?”

Nanon adored “*cette belle demoiselle*,” as she called Marie.

“No, no, Nanon; good-night.”

She passed quietly out of the back door into the garden. The night air was cool; she shivered slightly.

“I have nothing to stay for now,” she said; “he needs me no longer. If he knew I was with him, it would vex him. He has banished me from his heart, and all my life is over; and I deserve it all.”

Strange retribution, that the very words which Monsieur Josef had uttered in his despair should rise to *her* lips!

Softly she let herself into her mother’s house, and crept up to her own room. It looked bare and comfortless, and the moonlight shone in drearily through the uncurtained window (for Madame Delorme was a thrifty

woman, and during her daughter's absence she had saved the white curtains). Marie threw herself on the bed—it was the first time she had lain down since Monsieur Josef's illness, and she was fairly worn out with grief and watching. Suspense was over—he was safe; and he had pronounced her sentence in her hearing. She had nothing now to hope or fear. and with a burst of tears, Marie—the Marie who had once been so proud and disdainful—buried her face in the pillow and sobbed like a child. Then, exhausted by her weeping, she fell into a heavy slumber, which lasted till morning broke.

* * * * *

“And so you are fast recovering,” said Madame Gaspard, some days later, to Monsieur Josef, as he sat in an arm-chair, propped up with cushions. “Well, I always thought you would get over it. You and Mademoiselle Marie have changed places. I met her this morning, and she looks like death—pale, and thin, and large blue rings round her eyes. To be sure, it is no wonder, when she never slept for a fortnight.”

“What can you mean, Madame Gaspard?”

“My meaning is plain enough, *mon ami*.

Marie Delorme watched by you day and night when you were ill; she hardly ate anything all the time; she never slept; if she closed her eyes a moment in that chair she was only pretending, and now she is worn out, and I say again, no wonder."

"I did not know—I never dreamed," began Monsieur Josef, faintly, the colour rising in his face.

"Of course not; your mother thought you too weak to be told, but that's nonsense, in my opinion, so I just came in while your mother takes the air with Nanon in the garden. Well, have you no message to send Mademoiselle Marie? I am going in to see her mother now."

"Yes, yes. Ah! I cannot say what I would, only will she condescend to come and see me, since I cannot go and thank her myself?"

Madame Gaspard departed with her message, and almost before Monsieur Josef realised that she was gone, she came back.

"I met Mademoiselle Delorme in the garden with your mother," she said, "she has kindly promised to sit with you while I take a little turn with Madame Olivier." So saying, she ushered in Marie, and disappeared, shutting the door behind her. Pale, confused, and

trembling, Marie came towards Monsieur Josef's chair.

"They told me you slept," she said, "or I would not have intruded."

"Could this be Marie?" questioned Monsieur Josef to himself, "ah! it must be the pride that apes humility." He rose from his chair, but he was still very weak, and he could hardly stand. "I can never thank you sufficiently for the grace you have done me," he said slowly.

"Monsieur Josef, you have nothing to thank me for, I can never atone for the wrong I did you." Marie's face flushed painfully as she spoke.

"Then it was a sense of duty that led you to nurse me?" He stood by her side as he spoke, looking searchingly into her blue eyes, suddenly she raised her head with the old proud gesture.

"No, Monsieur Josef, it was *not* duty, it was love. I can tell you now, now when it is too late, when it can avail me nothing but to humble my pride. I loved you and I deserve my punishment."

"Your punishment?"

"Ay, I heard you say your love was cured.

I know you thought me too wicked to care for any longer, but I loved you all the time. When I vowed never to see you again if you did not give way to me, I did not mean it, I respected you for refusing to do wrong, and—I loved you.” She turned upon him almost fiercely. “And now you know all, I have done as I vowed to myself that I would, I have humiliated myself to the very dust as a just consequence of my fault, and now I will leave you.” She turned away, but with all his weakness he was too quick for her.

“Marie, my own! *my* Marie at last!” were the words that greeted her ear, and his arm was round her, his lips murmuring words of love and comfort.

“No, no,” she cried, trying to break from him, “you said you had ceased to love me, I will not have the love that springs from pity.” She stood before him, flushed and indignant almost like her old self.

“Marie,” he said, slowly and solemnly, “I never loved but you, I loved you all along, I love you now, with a love of which you can never imagine the depth and strength. I know I am very unworthy of you, your refusal of my love some time ago taught me my own worth,

but if the hearty love of an honest man will content you, you know it is yours."

She looked up in his face with a searching glance, then laid her face in her hands. "I am not worthy of such love," she murmured. "Josef, Josef, you are so noble and so true—but—I am yours in heart; teach me to be like you."

Tenderly he folded her in his arms, and as she looked up, her golden hair falling round her face like a halo, and all her love for him shining out from the clear depths of her sapphire eyes, he cried passionately, "Marie, Marie, I would go through centuries of torment if I were to be rewarded by one hour like this, one moment of such exquisite happiness."

"And so your revenge is given up for ever, my child," said a voice behind them, and Mr. de Solent stood on the threshold. "Ah! Marie, is not such true, faithful love worth more to you than all the vengeance in the world?" He came forward and took a hand of each. "Henceforward, my children," he said, "your interests are one, let them never be divided again." And then solemnly, and with all his heart in the words, he blessed them both, as together they knelt before him.

CHAPTER XV.

COLONEL HEYTON met Gabrielle in her morning walk some few days after she had received Miles's letter ; all the soft bloom had gone from her face, her eyes were heavy, and her smile, when she greeted Colonel Heyton, was evidently forced. He had purposely thrown himself in her way, for he felt that, as he had been the innocent cause of her estrangement from Miles, he ought to do what he could to bring about a reconciliation, but he found he had undertaken a task which was beyond his powers. Miles had disappeared completely from England, and no one knew where he was ; it was no longer then a question of reconciliation, it was to console Gabrielle and find Miles, and this he could not do, for he had not the slightest clue to Miles's present abode, wherever it might be. But Gabrielle was always glad to see Colonel Heyton, whom she had known long ago in her childhood, and always liked and trusted ; and this morning she had a favour to ask him ; she wanted him to persuade her father to send her to stay a little while with her old school mistress.

“I am not very well,” she said with a sad smile on her young face which it was pitiful to see, “and I am sure it will do me good. Marie Delorme is to be married soon, and she is very anxious that I should be at her wedding. Will you speak to papa, Colonel Heyton?”

Colonel Heyton would about as soon have walked boldly up to the mouth of a loaded cannon, rather sooner, in fact, but he could not resist the pleading tone; there had always been a soft place in his heart for Gabrielle, since the time when she was a little child and had come to him in all her childish griefs, in default of having a mother or father to go to, who would care for her. So he promised, and the same day he spoke to Mr. Wylde. To his intense surprise, instead of the indignation he expected, he met with an immediate acquiescence; the fact was, that Mr. Wylde had noticed Gabrielle's looks, and feeling that he had done the mischief, and was powerless to comfort her, he was glad of an excuse for getting her out of his sight, for her sad face was a perpetual reproach to him. He consented, then, to Gabrielle's request, and a fortnight later saw Gabrielle re-installed in her own little room at Marvillais. How familiar, and yet how strange, seemed

every object in the little town in Gabrielle's eyes, and ah ! how changed was she herself from the happy girl she had been one short year ago. Naturally unreserved, she yet did not tell Marie of her sorrow ; to her it seemed impossible to speak of it, and though Marie noticed that her cheek was thinner and paler, and she herself quieter than the little Gabrielle of old, Marie had too much delicacy to question her, as she so evidently wished to be silent ; besides, Marie was very much occupied in preparations for her own marriage, which was to take place very soon, and Gabrielle lent her help with a cheerful readiness and forced gaiety which were often painful to witness. And so matters went on till one lovely evening, when Monsieur Josef persuaded Marie and Gabrielle, and also Madame Delorme, to go with him for a row on the river. It was early summer again. The twilight was beginning to fall, when the four stepped into the little boat by the bridge ; a hard push, and they were off the boat skimming the surface of the water like a swallow. Gabrielle sat by Madame Delorme, dreamily gazing up into the darkening sky, which was growing almost purple now, and in which the little stars shone faintly, and

her thoughts were very far away, in England, with Miles on the lawn at home, and then, in imagination, following him to unknown lands. Marie and Monsieur Josef occupied the other end of the boat, but they were both silent; all that life could give—happiness, love, and mutual trust—was theirs, and their hearts were too full for speech. The old boatman alone—who was neither sorrowful nor in love—made a remark now and then which was answered by Madame Delorme, but for the most part there was no sound but the dipping of the oars and the swaying of the trees from the shore, as they rustled in the night breeze. They had gone about a mile down the river, the moon had risen and shone down on the boat, silvering the blue water and the trees that grew along the bank. Marie had begun to sing, her rich voice rising clearly and sweetly through the night, when suddenly there was a shout from the shore. The old boatman stayed his oars to listen; it was repeated, and then Monsieur Josef answered with a loud call of "*Qui est là?*" The answer came in truly John Bull French, "it was a traveller who had lost his way; would they take him in their boat, for he was completely tired out?"

What was it made Gabrielle start and gasp for breath? She clasped her hands tightly. It must be a delusion, she told herself; it could not be *his* voice? There was a short consultation, and Madame Delorme urged that it was hardly prudent to pick up a stranger—evidently an Englishman, too—who might rob and murder them. But she was overruled by the others. “They were five to one,” said Monsieur Josef and the boatman, “and it was cruel to leave this man if he really did not know his way; there were some deep, large holes by the river side, which were dangerous to a stranger who did not know the country.” And so they made for the shore, and there, standing on the bank, the moonlight shining full upon his face, stood Miles Lillingston! There was a low irrepressible cry from Gabrielle, “Miles!” and then, somehow—neither of them quite knew how—he had caught her in his arms, and all misunderstanding was over for ever; they were together, and nothing could part them any more. And then came a torrent of explanations to Madame Delorme, whose usual stateliness had given way to astonishment and displeasure at what she deemed “such an unseemly proceeding,” until she had heard all

from Miles's voluble speeches and Gabrielle's soft echoing of his words. His explanation to Gabrielle of his appearing so opportunely was simple enough. Tired of his life, and wandering aimlessly about in France, he had been staying at a town some miles off, and in a lengthened walk he had lost his way; with what unexpected results we have seen. And the boat, with its freight of happy hearts, glided slowly home along the rippling water, till the lights of Marvillais came in sight.

* * * *

And so the lovers were reconciled, and Mr. Wylde, after a somewhat stiff letter to Miles, became suddenly demonstrative, sent for Gabrielle to return home, and withdrew his former condition of the two years' waiting, possibly because he was thankful to resign the guardianship of so troublesome a ward as he considered Gabrielle to be. So the wedding was to take place almost immediately, and Gabrielle's path in life was as smooth as Marie had once prophesied to her that it would be.

One more scene from Marie's life, and we have done.

On a bright sunny evening in August, Marie (now Madame Josef Olivier), sits in the little

sitting-room with her mother-in-law, awaiting her husband's return ; he has been sent for to the inn, where some strangers have been taken ill, and the incident recalls to Marie's mind poor John Temple's death, which happened a year ago. Presently Monsieur Josef opens the door, and beckons to his wife from the threshold ; his mother is asleep, so Marie leaves her work and steps noiselessly out into the garden. Something has evidently troubled Monsieur Josef, and Marie sees it.

"Josef," she says, and her voice has lost the old metallic ring it once had, it is soft and tender now.

"Josef, tell me what is wrong."

He makes an effort. "*Allons*, my darling, I am very foolish, but there are some subjects I cannot bear to touch upon. Marie, I was called to the inn to see a lady who was dying ; she died while I was there. She had evidently been ill a long time, and heart disease ended her complaint. She has left a little girl, a child of, perhaps, two years old, Marie, all alone."

"And you did not bring her here, *mon ami* ; what were you thinking of ?"

"I knew you would think that, Marie, but

listen. You remember Monsieur Daryl? Well, he embarked in some questionable speculation, it failed, and his creditors came down upon him. He would have fled with his wife and child to France, hoping to persuade a relation whom he had living there to take him in with them. But he was caught before he could leave England, and his wife and child came on alone; young, helpless, and very delicate, the poor lady was so bewildered that she lost the address of this relation, and when, last night, she arrived here, she was quite unable to move. Need I go on, Marie? need I say that this poor lady was Louis Daryl's wife, and the little helpless child is Louis Daryl's daughter, left alone, friendless and helpless, in this town?"

"Not alone, not friendless," cried Marie, her blue eyes gleaming with generous warmth. "Josef, I shall have my revenge at last, and my revenge shall be—coals of living fire. Yes, Josef, yes, you deprived me of my revenge once, and now I have it from your hands. Ah, my husband, my good husband, see what you have for a wife—a woman who cannot give up her revenge even now," and she threw herself into her husband's arms.

"My own Marie, my own true wife," he said tenderly, and bent his head to kiss the blushing face she raised to his.

Before an hour had passed, little Margaret Daryl was established in Josef's house, and had made her way to Marie's heart, and there we will leave her, only saying, as the good old curé did when he heard of it, "My children, it would be well for us all if we were always content with such a noble vengeance as Marie's has been; believe me, no other can satisfy the heart or give it peace and happiness."

In the peaceful churchyard at Marvillais there is a stone cross erected to the memory of "John Temple." It was placed over his grave by Monsieur Josef, and often, in the long summer evenings, when Marie and little Margaret go to place flowers on Mrs. Daryl's tomb, the child lingers near the stranger's grave, and asks again "for the story of the poor man who had no friends," and when Marie tells it, carefully suppressing Louis Daryll's name, the little one kneels on the turf and prays, "Not only for poor John Temple," she says naïvely, "but for the man who ruined him, for monsieur le curé says that the wicked need our prayers more than the good do." And as Marie hears the uncon-

scious child praying for her erring father, she allows herself to hope that some day he may repent and be forgiven through his little daughter's prayers.

THE END.

